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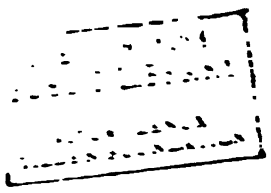

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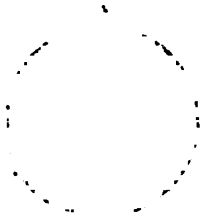

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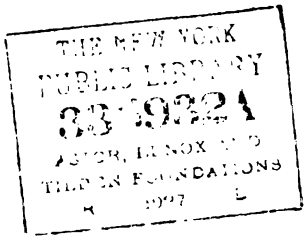
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THE EDUCATION OF OTIS YEERE

I

In the pleasant orchard-closes
"God bless all our gains," say we;
But "May God bless all our losses,"
Better suits with our degree.

The Lost Bower.

THIS is the history of a failure; but the woman who failed said that it might be an instructive tale to put into print for the benefit of the younger generation. The younger generation does not want instruction, being perfectly willing to instruct if any one will listen to it. None the less, here begins the story where every right-minded story should begin, that is to say at Simla, where all things begin and many come to an evil end.

The mistake was due to a very clever woman making a blunder and not retrieving it. Men are licensed to stumble, but a clever woman's mistake is outside the regular course of Nature and Providence; since all good people know that a woman is the only infallible thing in this world, except Government Paper of the '79 issue, bear-

yet? I said: 'So I have observed in my dealings with you.' The Mussuck swelled with pride. He is coming to call on me to-morrow. The Hawley Boy is coming too."

"'Strict supervision and play them off one against the other. *That*, Mrs. Hauksbee, is the secret of *our* Government.' And I daresay if we could get to The Mussuck's heart, we should find that he considers himself a man of the world."

"As he is of the other two things. I like The Mussuck, and I won't have you call him names. He amuses me."

"He has reformed you, too, by what appears. Explain the interval of sanity, and hit Tim on the nose with the paper-cutter, please. That dog is too fond of sugar. Do you take milk in yours?"

"No, thanks. Polly, I'm wearied of this life. It's hollow."

"Turn religious, then. I always said that Rome would be your fate."

"Only exchanging half a dozen *attachés* in red for one in black, and if I fasted, the wrinkles would come, and never, *never* go. Has it ever struck you, dear, that I'm getting old?"

"Thanks for your courtesy. I'll return it. Ye-es, we are both not exactly — how shall I put it?"

"What we have been. 'I feel it in my bones,' as Mrs. Crossley says. Polly, I've wasted my life."

"As how?"

"Never mind how. I feel it. I want to be a Power before I die."

"Be a Power then. You've wits enough for anything — and beauty?"

Mrs. Hauksbee pointed a teaspoon straight at her hostess. "Polly, if you heap compliments on me like this, I shall cease to believe that you're a woman. Tell me how I am to be a Power."

"Inform The Mussuck that he is the most fascinating and slimmest man in Asia, and he'll tell you anything and everything you please."

"Bother The Mussuck! I mean an intellectual Power — not a gas-power. Polly, I'm going to start a *salon*."

Mrs. Mallowe turned lazily on the sofa and rested her head on her hand. "Hear the words of the Preacher, the son of Baruch," she said.

"*Will* you talk sensibly?"

"I will, dear, for I see that you are going to make a mistake."

"I never made a mistake in my life — at least, never one that I couldn't explain away afterwards."

"Going to make a mistake," went on Mrs. Mallowe composedly. "It is impossible to start a *salon* in Simla. A bar would be much more to the point."

"Perhaps, but why? It seems so easy."

"Just what makes it so difficult. How many clever women are there in Simla?"

"Myself and yourself," said Mrs. Hauksbee, without a moment's hesitation.

"Modest woman! Mrs. Feardon would thank you for that. And how many clever men?"

"Oh — er — hundreds," said Mrs. Hauksbee vaguely.

"What a fatal blunder! Not one. They are all bespoke by the Government. Take my husband, for instance. Jack *was* a clever man, though I say so who shouldn't. Government has eaten him up. All his ideas and powers of conversation—he really used to be a good talker, even to his wife, in the old days—are taken from him by this—this kitchen-sink of a Government. That's the case with every man up here who is at work. I don't suppose a Russian convict under the knout is able to amuse the rest of his gang; and all our men-folk here are gilded convicts."

"But there are scores ——"

"I know what you're going to say. Scores of idle men up on leave. I admit it, but they are all of two objectionable sets. The Civilian who'd be delightful if he had the military man's knowledge of the world and style, and the military man who'd be adorable if he had the Civilian's culture."

"Detestable word! *Have* Civilians culchaw? I never studied the breed deeply."

"Don't make fun of Jack's service. Yes. They're like the teapoys in the Lakka Bazar—good material but not polished. They can't help themselves, poor dears. A Civilian only begins to be tolerable after he has knocked about the world for fifteen years."

"And a military man?"

"When he has had the same amount of service. The young of both species are horrible. You would have scores of them in your *salon*."

"I would *not!*" said Mrs. Hauksbee fiercely. "I would tell the bearer to *darwaza band* them. I'd put their own colonels and commissioners at the door to turn them away. I'd give them to the Topsham girl to play with."

"The Topsham girl would be grateful for the gift. But to go back to the *salon*. Allowing that you had gathered all your men and women together, what would you do with them? Make them talk? They would all with one accord begin to flirt. Your *salon* would become a glorified Peliti's—a 'Scandal Point' by lamp-light."

"There's a certain amount of wisdom in that view."

"There's all the wisdom in the world in it. Surely, twelve Simla seasons ought to have taught you that you can't focus anything in India; and a *salon*, to be any good at all, must be permanent. In two seasons your roomful would be scattered

all over Asia. We are only little bits of dirt on the hillsides — here one day and blown down the *khud* the next. We have lost the art of talking — at least our men have. We have no cohesion ——"

"George Eliot in the flesh," interpolated Mrs. Hauksbee wickedly.

"And collectively, my dear scoffer, we, men and women alike, have *no* influence. Come into the verandah and look at the Mall!"

The two looked down on the now rapidly filling road, for all Simla was abroad to steal a stroll between a shower and a fog.

"How do you propose to fix that river? Look! There's The Mussuck — head of goodness knows what. He is a power in the land, though he *does* eat like a costermonger. There's Colonel Blone, and General Grucher, and Sir Dugald Delane, and Sir Henry Haughton, and Mr. Jellalatty. All Heads of Departments, and all powerful."

"And all my fervent admirers," said Mrs. Hauksbee piously. "Sir Henry Haughton raves about me. But go on."

"One by one, these men are worth something. Collectively, they're just a mob of Anglo-Indians. Who cares for what Anglo-Indians say? Your *salon* won't weld the Departments together and make you mistress of India, dear. And these creatures won't talk administrative 'shop' in a

crowd — your *salon* — because they are so afraid of the men in the lower ranks overhearing it. They have forgotten what of Literature and Art they ever knew, and the women——"

"Can't talk about anything except the last Gymkhana, or the sins of their last nurse. I was calling on Mrs. Derwills this morning."

"You admit that? They can talk to the subalterns though, and the subalterns can talk to them. Your *salon* would suit their views admirably, if you respected the religious prejudices of the country and provided plenty of *kala juggabs*."

"Plenty of *kala juggabs*. Oh, my poor little idea! *Kala juggabs* in a *salon!* But who made you so awfully clever?"

"Perhaps I've tried myself; or perhaps I know a woman who has. I have preached and expounded the whole matter, and the conclusion thereof——"

"You needn't go on. 'Is Vanity.' Polly, I thank you. These vermin"— Mrs. Hauksbee waved her hand from the verandah to two men in the crowd below who had raised their hats to her —"these vermin shall not rejoice in a new Scandal Point or an extra Peliti's. I will abandon the notion of a *salon*. It did seem so tempting, though. But what shall I do? I must do something."

"Why? Are not Abana and Pharpar——"

"Jack has made you nearly as bad as himself!

"Lucy, for Heaven's sake, don't go waving your arms about in that idiotic manner! Recollect, every one can see you from the Mall."

"Let them see! They'll think I am rehearsing for 'The Fallen Angel.' Look! There's The Mussuck. How badly he rides. There!"

She blew a kiss to the venerable Indian administrator with infinite grace.

"Now," she continued, "he'll be chaffed about that at the Club in the delicate manner those brutes of men affect, and the Hawley Boy will tell me all about it — softening the details for fear of shocking me. That boy is too good to live, Polly. I've serious thoughts of recommending him to throw up his Commission and go into the Church. In his present frame of mind he would obey me. Happy, happy child!"

"Never again," said Mrs. Mallowe, with an affectation of indignation, "shall you tiffin here! 'Lucindy, your behaviour is scand'lus.'"

"All your fault," retorted Mrs. Hauksbee, "for suggesting such a thing as my abdication. No! *Jamais*-nevaire! I will act, dance, ride, frivol, talk scandal, dine out, and appropriate the legitimate captives of any woman I choose, until I d-r-r-rop, or a better woman than I puts me to shame before all Simla,—and it's dust and ashes in my mouth while I'm doing it!"

She swept into the drawing-room. Mrs.

Mallowe followed and put an arm round her waist.

"I'm *not!*" said Mrs. Hauksbee defiantly, rummaging for her handkerchief. "I've been dining out the last ten nights, and rehearsing in the afternoon. You'd be tired yourself. It's only because I'm tired."

Mrs. Mallowe did not offer Mrs. Hauksbee any pity or ask her to lie down, but gave her another cup of tea, and went on with the talk.

"I've been through that too, dear," she said.

"I remember," said Mrs. Hauksbee, a gleam of fun on her face. "In '84, wasn't it? You went out a great deal less next season."

Mrs. Mallowe smiled in a superior and Sphinx-like fashion.

"I became an Influence," said she.

"Good gracious, child, you didn't join the Theosophists and kiss Buddha's big toe, did you? I tried to get into their set once, but they cast me out for a sceptic—without a chance of improving my poor little mind, too."

"No, I didn't Theosophilander. Jack says ——"

"Never mind Jack. What a husband says is known before. What did you do?"

"I made a lasting impression."

"So have I — for four months. But that didn't console me in the least. I hated the man. *Will*

Conference was the Great Idea upon which Mrs. Hauksbee so plumed herself.

"I warn you," said Mrs. Mallowe, beginning to repent of her suggestion, "that the matter is not half so easy as it looks. Any woman — even the Topsham girl — can catch a man, but very, *very* few know how to manage him when caught."

"My child," was the answer, "I've been a female St. Simon Stylites looking down upon men for these — these years past. Ask The Mussuck whether I can manage them."

Mrs. Hauksbee departed humming, "*I'll go to him and say to him in manner most ironical.*" Mrs. Mallowe laughed to herself. Then she grew suddenly sober. "I wonder whether I've done well in advising that amusement? Lucy's a clever woman, but a thought too careless."

A week later, the two met at a Monday Pop. "Well?" said Mrs. Mallowe.

"I've caught him!" said Mrs. Hauksbee; her eyes were dancing with merriment.

"Who is it, mad woman? I'm sorry I ever spoke to you about it."

"Look between the pillars. In the third row; fourth from the end. You can see his face now. Look!"

"Otis Yeere! Of *all* the improbable and impossible people! I don't believe you."

"Hsh! Wait till Mrs. Tarkass begins murder-

ing Milton Wellings; and I'll tell you all about it. *S-s-ss!* That woman's voice always reminds me of an Underground train coming into Earl's Court with the brakes on. Now listen. It is *really* Otis Yeere."

"So I see, but does it follow that he is your property!"

"He *is!* By right of trove. I found him, lonely and unbefriended, the very next night after our talk, at the Dugald Delanes' *burra-khana.* I liked his eyes, and I talked to him. Next day he called. Next day we went for a ride together, and to-day he's tied to my 'rickshaw-wheels hand and foot. You'll see when the concert's over. He doesn't know I'm here yet."

"Thank goodness you haven't chosen a boy. What are you going to do with him, assuming that you've got him?"

"Assuming, indeed! Does a woman—do *I*—ever make a mistake in that sort of thing? First"—Mrs. Hauksbee ticked off the items ostentatiously on her little gloved fingers—"First, my dear, I shall dress him properly. At present his raiment is a disgrace, and he wears a dress-shirt like a crumpled sheet of the 'Pioneer.' Secondly, after I have made him presentable, I shall form his manners—his morals are above reproach."

"You seem to have discovered a great deal

about him considering the shortness of your acquaintance."

"Surely *you* ought to know that the first proof a man gives of his interest in a woman is by talking to her about his own sweet self. If the woman listens without yawning, he begins to like her. If she flatters the animal's vanity, he ends by adoring her."

"In some cases."

"Never mind the exceptions. I know which one you are thinking of. Thirdly, and lastly, after he is polished and made pretty, I shall, as you said, be his guide, philosopher, and friend, and he shall become a success — as great a success as your friend. I always wondered how that man got on. *Did* The Mussuck come to you with the Civil List and, dropping on one knee — no, two knees, *à la Gibbon* — hand it to you and say, 'Adorable angel, choose your friend's appointment'?"

"Lucy, your long experiences of the Military Department have demoralised you. One doesn't do that sort of thing on the Civil Side."

"No disrespect meant to Jack's Service, my dear. I only asked for information. Give me three months, and see what changes I shall work in my prey."

"Go your own way, since you must. But I'm sorry that I was weak enough to suggest the amusement."

"'I am all discretion, and may be trusted to an in-fin-ite extent,'" quoted Mrs. Hauksbee from "The Fallen Angel"; and the conversation ceased with Mrs. Tarkass's last, long-drawn war-whoop.

Her bitterest enemies — and she had many — could hardly accuse Mrs. Hauksbee of wasting her time. Otis Yeere was one of those wandering "dumb" characters, foredoomed through life to be nobody's property. Ten years in Her Majesty's Bengal Civil Service, spent, for the most part, in undesirable Districts, had given him little to be proud of, and nothing to bring confidence. Old enough to have lost the first fine careless rapture that showers on the immature 'Stunt imaginary Commissionerships and Stars, and sends him into the collar with coltish earnestness and abandon; too young to be yet able to look back upon the progress he had made, and thank Providence that under the conditions of the day he had come even so far, he stood upon the dead-centre of his career. And when a man stands still, he feels the slightest impulse from without. Fortune had ruled that Otis Yeere should be, for the first part of his service, one of the rank and file who are ground up in the wheels of the Administration; losing heart and soul, and mind and strength, in the process. Until steam replaces manual power in the working of the Empire, there must always be this percentage — must always be the men who are used up, ex-

pended, in the mere mechanical routine. For these promotion is far off and the mill-grind of every day very instant. The Secretariats know them only by name; they are not the picked men of the Districts with Divisions and Collectorates awaiting them. They are simply the rank and file — the food for fever — sharing with the *ryot* and the plough-bullock the honour of being the plinth on which the State rests. The older ones have lost their aspirations; the younger are putting theirs aside with a sigh. Both learn to endure patiently until the end of the day. Twelve years in the rank and file, men say, will sap the hearts of the bravest and dull the wits of the most keen.

Out of this life Otis Yeere had fled for a few months; drifting, in the hope of a little masculine society, into Simla. When his leave was over he would return to his swampy, sour-green, under-manned Bengal district; to the native Assistant, the native Doctor, the native Magistrate, the steaming, sweltering Station, the ill-kempt City, and the undisguised insolence of the Municipality that babbled away the lives of men. Life was cheap, however. The soil spawned humanity, as it bred frogs in the Rains, and the gap of the sickness of one season was filled to overflowing by the fecundity of the next. Otis was unfeignedly thankful to lay down his work for a little while

scended into the Mall to inquire; and Mrs. Hauksbee, coming over the Church Ridge in her 'rickshaw, looked down upon him approvingly. "He's learning to carry himself as if he were a man, instead of a piece of furniture,—and," she screwed up her eyes to see the better through the sunlight —"he *is* a man when he holds himself like that. Oh, blessed Conceit, what should we be without you."

With the new clothes came a new stock of self-confidence. Otis Yeere discovered that he could enter a room without breaking into a gentle perspiration—could cross one, even to talk to Mrs. Hauksbee, as though rooms were meant to be crossed. He was for the first time in nine years proud of himself, and contented with his life, satisfied with his new clothes, and rejoicing in the friendship of Mrs. Hauksbee.

"Conceit is what the poor fellow wants," she said in confidence to Mrs. Mallowe. "I believe they must use Civilians to plough the fields with in Lower Bengal. You see I have to begin from the very beginning—haven't I? But you'll admit, won't you, dear, that he is immensely improved since I took him in hand. Only give me a little more time and he won't know himself."

Indeed, Yeere was rapidly beginning to forget what he had been. One of his own rank and file put the matter brutally when he asked Yeere,

in reference to nothing, "And who has been making *you* a Member of Council, lately? You carry the side of half a dozen of 'em."

"I — I'm awfly sorry. I didn't mean it, you know," said Yeere apologetically.

"There'll be no holding you," continued the old stager grimly. "Climb down, Otis — climb down, and get all that beastly affectation knocked out of you with fever! Three thousand a month wouldn't support it."

Yeere repeated the incident to Mrs. Hauksbee. He had come to look upon her as his Mother Confessor.

"And you apologised!" she said. "Oh, shame! I *hate* a man who apologises. Never apologise for what your friend called 'side.' *Never!* It's a man's business to be insolent and overbearing until he meets with a stronger. Now, you bad boy, listen to me."

Simply and straightforwardly, as the 'rickshaw loitered round Jakko, Mrs. Hauksbee preached to Otis Yeere the Great Gospel of Conceit, illustrating it with living pictures encountered during their Sunday afternoon stroll.

"Good gracious!" she ended with the personal argument, "you'll apologise next for being my *attaché?*"

"Never!" said Otis Yeere. "That's another thing altogether. I shall always be ——"

"What's coming?" thought Mrs. Hauksbee.

"Proud of that," said Otis.

"Safe for the present," she said to herself.

"But I'm afraid I have grown conceited. Like Jeshurun, you know. When he waxed fat, then he kicked. It's the having no worry on one's mind and the Hill air, I suppose."

"Hill air, indeed!" said Mrs. Hauksbee to herself. "He'd have been hiding in the Club till the last day of his leave, if I hadn't discovered him." And aloud —

"Why shouldn't you be? You have every right to."

"I! Why?"

"Oh, hundreds of things. I'm not going to waste this lovely afternoon by explaining; but I know you have. What was that heap of manuscript you showed me about the grammar of the aboriginal — what's their names?"

"*Gullals.* A piece of nonsense. I've far too much work to do to bother over *Gullals* now. You should see my District. Come down with your husband some day and I'll show you round. Such a lovely place in the Rains! A sheet of water with the railway-embankment and the snakes sticking out, and, in the summer, green flies and green squash. The people would die of fear if you shook a dog-whip at 'em. But they know you're forbidden to do that, so they conspire

face, said tenderly, almost too tenderly, "*I* believe in you, if you mistrust yourself. Is that enough, my friend?"

"It is enough," answered Otis very solemnly.

He was silent for a long time, redreaming the dreams that he had dreamed eight years ago, but through them all ran, as sheet-lightning through golden cloud, the light of Mrs. Hauksbee's violet eyes.

Curious and impenetrable are the mazes of Simla life — the only existence in this desolate land worth the living. Gradually it went abroad among men and women, in the pauses between dance, play, and Gymkhana, that Otis Yeere, the man with the newly-lit light of self-confidence in his eyes, had "done something decent" in the wilds whence he came. He had brought an erring Municipality to reason, appropriated the funds on his own responsibility, and saved the lives of hundreds. He knew more about the *Gullals* than any living man. Had a vast knowledge of the aboriginal tribes; was, in spite of his juniority, the greatest authority on the aboriginal *Gullals*. No one quite knew who or what the *Gullals* were, till The Mussuck, who had been calling on Mrs. Hauksbee, and prided himself upon picking people's brains, explained they were a tribe of ferocious hillmen, somewhere near Sikkim, whose friendship even the Great Indian Empire would find it worth her

while to secure. Now we know that Otis Yeere had showed Mrs. Hauksbee his MS. notes of six years' standing on these same *Gullals*. He had told her, too, how, sick and shaken with the fever their negligence had bred, crippled by the loss of his pet clerk, and savagely angry at the desolation in his charge, he had once damned the collective eyes of his "intelligent local board" for a set of *baramzadas*. Which act of "brutal and tyrannous oppression" won him a Reprimand Royal from the Bengal Government; but in the anecdote as amended for Northern consumption we find no record of this. Hence we are forced to conclude that Mrs. Hauksbee edited his reminiscences before sowing them in idle ears, ready, as she well knew, to exaggerate good or evil. And Otis Yeere bore himself as befitted the hero of many tales.

"You can talk to *me* when you don't fall into a brown study. Talk now, and talk your brightest and best," said Mrs. Hauksbee.

Otis needed no spur. Look to a man who has the counsel of a woman of or above the world to back him. So long as he keeps his head, he can meet both sexes on equal ground — an advantage never intended by Providence, who fashioned Man on one day and Woman on another, in sign that neither should know more than a very little of the other's life. Such a man goes far, or, the

have changed the Station and lost the rent to have saved this. He said, in so many words, that he wasn't going to try to work up any more, because — because he would be shifted into a province away from Darjiling, and his own District, where these creatures are, is within a day's journey ——"

"Ah—hh!" said Mrs. Mallowe, in a tone of one who has successfully tracked an obscure word through a large dictionary.

"Did you ever *hear* of anything so mad — so absurd? And he had the ball at his feet. He had only to kick it! I would have made him *anything!* Anything in the wide world. He could have gone to the world's end. I would have helped him. I made him, didn't I, Polly? Didn't I *create* that man? Doesn't he owe everything to me? And to reward me, just when everything was nicely arranged, by this lunacy that spoilt everything!"

"Very few men understand your devotion thoroughly."

"Oh, Polly, *don't* laugh at me! I give men up from this hour. I could have killed him then and there. What *right* had this man — this *Thing* I had picked out of his filthy paddy-fields — to make love to me?"

"He did that, did he?"

"He did. I don't remember half he said, I was so angry. Oh, but such a funny thing happened!

I can't help laughing at it now, though I felt nearly ready to cry with rage. He raved and I stormed — I'm afraid we must have made an awful noise in our *kala juggah.* Protect my character, dear, if it's all over Simla by to-morrow — and then he bobbed forward in the middle of this insanity — I *firmly* believe the man's demented — and kissed me!"

"Morals above reproach," purred Mrs. Mallowe.

"So they were — so they are! It was the most absurd kiss. I don't believe he'd ever kissed a woman in his life before. I threw my head back, and it was a sort of slidy, pecking dab, just on the end of the chin — here." Mrs. Hauksbee tapped her masculine little chin with her fan. "Then, of course, I was *furiously* angry, and told him that he was no gentleman, and I was sorry I'd ever met him, and so on. He was crushed so easily that I couldn't be *very* angry. Then I came away straight to you."

"Was this before or after supper?"

"Oh! before — oceans before. Isn't it perfectly disgusting?"

"Let me think. I withhold judgment till to-morrow. Morning brings counsel."

But morning brought only a servant with a dainty bouquet of Annandale roses for Mrs. Hauksbee to wear at the dance at Viceregal Lodge that night.

"He doesn't seem to be very penitent," said Mrs. Mallowe. "What's the *billet-doux* in the centre?"

Mrs. Hauksbee opened the neatly-folded note, —another accomplishment that she had taught Otis,—read it, and groaned tragically.

"Last wreck of a feeble intellect! Poetry! Is it his own, do you think? Oh, that I ever built my hopes on such a maudlin idiot!"

"No. It's a quotation from Mrs. Browning, and, in view of the facts of the case, as Jack says, uncommonly well chosen. Listen—

"Sweet thou hast trod on a heart,
Pass! There's a world full of men;
And women as fair as thou art,
Must do such things now and then.

Thou only hast stepped unaware—
Malice not one can impute;
And why should a heart have been there,
In the way of a fair woman's foot?"

"I didn't—I didn't—I didn't!" said Mrs. Hauksbee angrily, her eyes filling with tears; "there was no malice at all. Oh, it's *too* vexatious!"

"You've misunderstood the compliment," said Mrs. Mallowe. "He clears you completely and —ahem—I should think by this, that *he* has cleared completely too. My experience of men is that when they begin to quote poetry, they are

going to flit. Like swans singing before they die, you know."

"Polly, you take my sorrows in a most unfeeling way."

"Do I? Is it so terrible? If he's hurt your vanity, I should say that you've done a certain amount of damage to his heart."

"Oh, you never can tell about a man!" said Mrs. Hauksbee.

A SECOND-RATE WOMAN

Est fuga, volvitur rota,
On we drift: where looms the dim port?
One Two Three Four Five contribute their quota:
Something is gained if one caught but the impor**f,**
Show it us, Hugues of Saxe-Gotha.
Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha.

"DRESSED! Don't tell me that woman ever dressed in her life. She stood in the middle of the room while her *ayah* — no, her husband — it *must* have been a man — threw her clothes at her. She then did her hair with her fingers, and rubbed her bonnet in the flue under the bed. I *know* she did, as well as if I had assisted at the orgy. Who is she?" said Mrs. Hauksbee.

"Don't!" said Mrs. Mallowe feebly. "You make my head ache. I'm miserable to-day. Stay me with *fondants*, comfort me with chocolates, for I am — Did you bring anything from Peliti's?"

"Questions to begin with. You shall have the sweets when you have answered them. Who and what is the creature? There were at least half a dozen men round her, and she appeared to be going to sleep in their midst."

"Delville," said Mrs. Mallowe. "Shaiv Delville, to distinguish her from Mrs. Jim of that ilk. She dances as prettily as she dresses, I believe, and her husband is somewhere in Madras. Go and call, if you are so interested."

"What have I to do with Shigramitish women? She merely caught my attention for a minute, and I wondered at the attraction that a dowd has for a certain type of man. I expected to see her walk out of her clothes — until I looked at her eyes."

"Hooks and eyes, surely," drawled Mrs. Mallowe.

"Don't be clever, Polly. You make my head ache. And round this barrick stood a crowd of men — a positive crowd!"

"Perhaps *they* also expected ——"

"Polly, don't be Rabelaisian!"

Mrs. Mallowe curled herself up comfortably on the sofa, and turned her attention to the sweets. She and Mrs. Hauksbee shared the same house at Simla; and these things befell two seasons after the matter of Otis Yeere, which has been already recorded.

Mrs. Hauksbee stepped into the verandah and looked down upon the Mall, her forehead puckered with thought.

"Hah!" said Mrs. Hauksbee shortly. "Indeed!"

"What is it?" said Mrs. Mallowe sleepily.

"That dowd and The Dancing Master — to whom I object."

"Why to The Dancing Master? He is a middle-aged gentleman, of reprobate and romantic tendencies, and tries to be a friend of mine."

"Then make up your mind to lose him. Dowds cling by nature, and I should imagine that this animal — how terrible her bonnet looks from above! — is specially clingsome."

"She is welcome to The Dancing Master so far as I am concerned. I never could take an interest in a monotonous liar. The frustrated aim of his life is to persuade people that he is a bachelor."

"O-oh! I think I've met that sort of man before. And isn't he?"

"No. He confided that to me a few days ago. Ugh! Some men ought to be killed."

"What happened then?"

"He posed as the horror of horrors — a misunderstood man. Heaven knows the *femme incomprise* is sad enough and bad enough — but the other thing!"

"And so fat too! *I* should have laughed in his face. Men seldom confide in me! How is it they come to you?"

"For the sake of impressing me with their careers in the past. Protect me from men with confidences!"

"And yet you encourage them?"

"What can I do? They talk, I listen, and they vow that I am sympathetic. I know I always profess astonishment even when the plot is — of the most old possible."

"Yes. Men are so unblushingly explicit if they are once allowed to talk, whereas women's confidences are full of reservations and fibs, except ——"

"When they go mad and babble of the Unutterabilities after a week's acquaintance. Really, if you come to consider, we know a great deal more of men than of our own sex."

"And the extraordinary thing is that men will never believe it. They say we are trying to hide something."

"They are generally doing that on their own account. Alas! These chocolates pall upon me, and I haven't eaten more than a dozen. I think I shall go to sleep."

"Then you'll get fat, dear. If you took more exercise and a more intelligent interest in your neighbours you would ——"

"Be as much loved as Mrs. Hauksbee. You're a darling in many ways, and I like you — you are not a woman's woman — but *why* do you trouble yourself about mere human beings?"

"Because in the absence of angels, who I am sure would be horribly dull, men and women are

the most fascinating things in the whole wide world, lazy one. I am interested in The Dowd — I am interested in The Dancing Master — I am interested in the Hawley Boy — and I am interested in *you*."

"Why couple me with the Hawley Boy? He is your property."

"Yes, and in his own guileless speech, I'm making a good thing out of him. When he is slightly more reformed, and has passed his Higher Standard, or whatever the authorities think fit to exact from him, I shall select a pretty little girl, the Holt girl, I think, and"— here she waved her hands airily —"'whom Mrs. Hauksbee hath joined together let no man put asunder.' That's all."

"And when you have yoked May Holt with the most notorious detrimental in Simla, and earned the undying hatred of Mamma Holt, what will you do with me, Dispenser of the Destinies of the Universe?"

Mrs. Hauksbee dropped into a low chair in front of the fire, and, chin in hand, gazed long and steadfastly at Mrs. Mallowe.

"I do not know," she said, shaking her head, "*what* I shall do with you, dear. It's obviously impossible to marry you to some one else — your husband would object, and the experiment might not be successful after all. I think I shall begin

by preventing you from — what is it? — 'sleeping on ale-house benches and snoring in the sun.'"

"Don't! I don't like your quotations. They are so rude. Go to the Library and bring me new books."

"While you sleep? *No!* If you don't come with me, I shall spread your newest frock on my 'rickshaw-bow, and when any one asks me what I am doing, I shall say that I am going to Phelps's to get it let out. I shall take care that Mrs. MacNamara sees me. Put your things on, there's a good girl."

Mrs. Mallowe groaned and obeyed, and the two went off to the Library, where they found Mrs. Delville and the man who went by the nickname of The Dancing Master. By that time Mrs. Mallowe was awake and eloquent.

"That is the Creature!" said Mrs. Hauksbee, with the air of one pointing out a slug in the road.

"No," said Mrs. Mallowe. "The man is the Creature. Ugh! Good-evening, Mr. Bent. I thought you were coming to tea this evening."

"Surely it was for to-morrow, was it not?" answered The Dancing Master. "I understood . . . I fancied . . . I'm so sorry . . . How very unfortunate!" . . .

But Mrs. Mallowe had passed on.

"For the practised equivocator you said he was," murmured Mrs. Hauksbee, "he strikes *me*

as a failure. Now wherefore should he have preferred a walk with The Dowd to tea with us? Elective affinities, I suppose—both grubby. Polly, I'd never forgive that woman as long as the world rolls."

"I forgive every woman everything," said Mrs. Mallowe. "He will be a sufficient punishment for her. What a common voice she has!"

Mrs. Delville's voice was not pretty, her carriage was even less lovely, and her raiment was strikingly neglected. All these things Mrs. Mallowe noticed over the top of a magazine.

"Now *what* is there in her?" said Mrs. Hauksbee. "Do you see what I meant about the clothes falling off? If I were a man I would perish sooner than be seen with that rag-bag. And yet, she has good eyes, but — Oh!"

"What is it?"

"She doesn't know how to use them! On my Honour, she does not. Look! Oh, look! Untidiness I can endure, but ignorance never! The woman's a fool."

"Hsh! She'll hear you."

"All the women in Simla are fools. She'll think I mean some one else. Now she's going out. What a thoroughly objectionable couple she and The Dancing Master make! Which reminds me. Do you suppose they'll ever dance together?"

"Wait and see. I don't envy her the conversation of The Dancing Master — loathly man! His wife ought to be up here before long."

"Do you know anything about him?"

"Only what he told me. It may be all a fiction. He married a girl bred in the country, I think, and, being an honourable, chivalrous soul, told me that he repented his bargain and sent her to her mother as often as possible — a person who has lived in the Doon since the memory of man, and goes to Mussoorie when other people go Home. The wife is with her at present. So he says."

"Babies?"

"One only, but he talks of his wife in a revolting way. I hated him for it. *He* thought he was being epigrammatic and brilliant."

"That is a vice peculiar to men. I dislike him because he is generally in the wake of some girl, disappointing the Eligibles. He will persecute May Holt no more, unless I am much mistaken."

"No. I think Mrs. Delville may occupy his attention for a while."

"Do you suppose she knows that he is the head of a family?"

"Not from his lips. He swore me to eternal secrecy. Wherefore I tell you. Don't you know that type of man?"

"Not intimately, thank goodness! As a gen-

eral rule, when a man begins to abuse his wife to me, I find that the Lord gives me wherewith to answer him according to his folly; and we part with a coolness between us. I laugh."

"I'm different. I've no sense of humour."

"Cultivate it, then. It has been my mainstay for more years than I care to think about. A well-educated sense of Humour will save a woman when Religion, Training, and Home influences fail; and we may all need salvation sometimes."

"Do you suppose that the Delville woman has humour?"

"Her dress bewrays her. How can a Thing who wears her *supplément* under her left arm have any notion of the fitness of things — much less their folly? If she discards The Dancing Master after having once seen him dance, I may respect her. Otherwise ——"

"But are we not both assuming a great deal too much, dear? You saw the woman at Peliti's — half an hour later you saw her walking with The Dancing Master — an hour later you met her here at the Library."

"Still with The Dancing Master, remember."

"Still with The Dancing Master, I admit; but why, on the strength of that, should you imagine ——"

"I imagine nothing. I have no imagination. I am only convinced that The Dancing Master is

Mrs. Hanksbee departed, and, at the end of an hour, returned slightly flushed.

"There is no limit to the treachery of youth! I *ordered* the Hawley Boy, as he valued my patronage, not to call. The first person I stumble over—literally stumble over—in her poky, dark little drawing-room is, of course, the Hawley Boy. She kept us waiting ten minutes, and then emerged as though she had been tipped out of the dirty-clothes basket. You know my way, dear, when I am at all put out. I was Superior, *crrrrushingly* Superior! 'Lifted my eyes to Heaven, and had heard of nothing—'dropped my eyes on the carpet, and 'really didn't know'—'played with my card-case, and 'supposed so.' The Hawley Boy giggled like a girl, and I had to freeze him with scowls between the sentences."

"And she?"

"She sat in a heap on the edge of a couch, and managed to convey the impression that she was suffering from stomach-ache, at the very least. It was all I could do not to ask after her symptoms. When I rose, she grunted just like a buffalo in the water—too lazy to move."

"Are you certain——?"

"Am I blind, Polly? Laziness, sheer laziness, nothing else—or her garments were only constructed for sitting down in. I stayed for a quarter of an hour trying to penetrate the gloom, to guess

what her surroundings were like, while she stuck out her tongue."

"Lu—*cy!*"

"Well—I'll withdraw the tongue, though I'm sure if she didn't do it when I was in the room, she did the minute I was outside. At any rate, she lay in a lump and grunted. Ask the Hawley Boy, dear. I believe the grunts were meant for sentences, but she spoke so indistinctly that I can't swear to it."

"You are incorrigible, simply."

"I am *not!* Treat me civilly, give me peace with honour, don't put the only available seat facing the window, and a child may eat jam in my lap before Church. But I resent being grunted at. Wouldn't you? Do you suppose that she communicates her views on life and love to The Dancing Master in a set of modulated 'Grmphs'?"

"You attach too much importance to The Dancing Master."

"He came as we went, and The Dowd grew almost cordial at the sight of him. He smiled greasily, and moved about that darkened dog-kennel in a suspiciously familiar way."

"Don't be uncharitable. Any sin but that I'll forgive."

"Listen to the voice of History. I am only describing what I saw. He entered, the heap on the sofa revived slightly, and the Hawley Boy and

I came away together. *He* is disillusioned, but I felt it my duty to lecture him severely for going there. And that's all."

"Now for Pity's sake leave the wretched creature and The Dancing Master alone. They never did you any harm."

"No harm? To dress as an example and a stumbling-block for half Simla, and then to find this Person who is dressed by the hand of God—not that I wish to disparage *Him* for a moment, but you know the *tikka dhurzie* way He attires those lilies of the field—this Person draws the eyes of men—and some of them nice men? It's almost enough to make one discard clothing. I told the Hawley Boy so."

"And what did that sweet youth do?"

"Turned shell-pink and looked across the far blue hills like a distressed cherub. *Am* I talking wildly, Polly? Let me say my say, and I shall be calm. Otherwise I may go abroad and disturb Simla with a few original reflections. Excepting always your own sweet self, there isn't a single woman in the land who understands me when I am—what's the word?"

"*Tête-fêlée*," suggested Mrs. Mallowe.

"Exactly! And now let us have tiffin. The demands of Society are exhausting, and as Mrs. Delville says—" Here Mrs. Hauksbee, to the horror of the *khitmatgars*, lapsed into a series of

grunts, while Mrs. Mallowe stared in lazy surprise.

"'God gie us a gude conceit of oorselves,'" said Mrs. Hauksbee piously, returning to her natural speech. "Now, in any other woman that would have been vulgar. I am consumed with curiosity to see Mrs. Bent. I expect complications."

"Woman of one idea," said Mrs. Mallowe shortly; "all complications are as old as the hills! I have lived through or near all — *all* — ALL!"

"And yet do not understand that men and women never behave twice alike. I am old who was young — if ever I put my head in your lap, you dear, big sceptic, you will learn that my parting is gauze — but never, no never, have I lost my interest in men and women. Polly, I shall see this business out to the bitter end."

"I am going to sleep," said Mrs. Mallowe calmly. "I never interfere with men or women unless I am compelled," and she retired with dignity to her own room.

Mrs. Hauksbee's curiosity was not long left ungratified, for Mrs. Bent came up to Simla a few days after the conversation faithfully reported above, and pervaded the Mall by her husband's side.

"Behold!" said Mrs. Hauksbee, thoughtfully rubbing her nose. "That is the last link of the chain, if we omit the husband of the Delville, who-

ever he may be. Let me consider. The Bents and the Delvilles inhabit the same hotel; and the Delville is detested by the Waddy — do you know the Waddy? — who is almost as big a dowd. The Waddy also abominates the male Bent, for which, if her other sins do not weigh too heavily, she will eventually go to Heaven."

"Don't be irreverent," said Mrs. Mallowe; "I like Mrs. Bent's face."

"I am discussing the Waddy," returned Mrs. Hauksbee loftily. "The Waddy will take the female Bent apart, after having borrowed — yes! — everything that she can, from hairpins to babies' bottles. Such, my dear, is life in a hotel. The Waddy will tell the female Bent facts and fictions about The Dancing Master and The Dowd."

"Lucy, I should like you better if you were not always looking into people's back-bedrooms."

"Anybody can look into their front drawing-rooms; and remember, whatever I do, and whatever I look, I never talk — as the Waddy will. Let us hope that The Dancing Master's greasy smile and manner of the pedagogue will soften the heart of that cow, his wife. If mouths speak truth, I should think that little Mrs. Bent could get very angry on occasion."

"But what reason has she for being angry?"

"What reason! The Dancing Master in himself is a reason. How does it go? 'If in his life

some trivial errors fall, Look in his face and you'll believe them all.' I am prepared to credit *any* evil of The Dancing Master, because I hate him so. And The Dowd is so disgustingly badly dressed——"

"That she, too, is capable of every iniquity? I always prefer to believe the best of everybody. It saves so much trouble."

"Very good. I prefer to believe the worst. It saves useless expenditure of sympathy. And you may be quite certain that the Waddy believes with me."

Mrs. Mallowe sighed and made no answer.

The conversation was holden after dinner while Mrs. Hauksbee was dressing for a dance.

"I am too tired to go," pleaded Mrs. Mallowe, and Mrs. Hauksbee left her in peace till two in the morning, when she was aware of emphatic knocking at her door.

"Don't be *very* angry, dear," said Mrs. Hauksbee. "My idiot of an *ayah* has gone home, and, as I hope to sleep to-night, there isn't a soul in the place to unlace me."

"Oh, this is too bad!" said Mrs. Mallowe sulkily.

"Can't help it. I'm a lone, lorn grass-widow, dear, but I will *not* sleep in my stays. And such news too! Oh, *do* unlace me, there's a darling! The Dowd — The Dancing Master — I and the Hawley Boy — You know the North verandah?"

"How can I do anything if you spin round like this?" protested Mrs. Mallowe, fumbling with the knot of the laces.

"Oh, I forget. I must tell my tale without the aid of your eyes. Do you know you've lovely eyes, dear? Well, to begin with, I took the Hawley Boy to a *kala juggah*."

"Did he want much taking?"

"Lots! There was an arrangement of loose-boxes in *kanats*, and *she* was in the next one talking to *him*."

"Which? How? Explain."

"You know what I mean — The Dowd and The Dancing Master. We could hear every word, and we listened shamelessly — 'specially the Hawley Boy. Polly, I quite love that woman!"

"This is interesting. There! Now turn round. What happened?"

"One moment. Ah—h! Blessed relief. I've been looking forward to taking them off for the last half-hour — which is ominous at my time of life. But, as I was saying, we listened and heard The Dowd drawl worse than ever. She drops her final g's like a barmaid or a blue-blooded Aide-de-Camp. 'Look he-ere, you're gettin' too fond o' me,' she said, and The Dancing Master owned it was so in language that nearly made me ill. The Dowd reflected for a while. Then we heard her say, 'Look he-ere, Mister Bent, why are you such

that he had, during her absence in the Doon, been the victim of unceasing persecution at the hands of Mrs. Delville; and he told the tale so often and with such eloquence that he ended in believing it, while his wife marvelled at the manners and customs of "some women." When the situation showed signs of languishing, Mrs. Waddy was always on hand to wake the smouldering fires of suspicion in Mrs. Bent's bosom and to contribute generally to the peace and comfort of the hotel. Mr. Bent's life was not a happy one, for if Mrs. Waddy's story were true, he was, argued his wife, untrustworthy to the last degree. If his own statement was true, his charms of manner and conversation were so great that he needed constant surveillance. And he received it, till he repented genuinely of his marriage and neglected his personal appearance. Mrs. Delville alone in the hotel was unchanged. She removed her chair some six paces towards the head of the table, and occasionally in the twilight ventured on timid overtures of friendship to Mrs. Bent, which were repulsed.

"She does it for my sake," hinted the virtuous Bent.

"A dangerous and designing woman," purred Mrs. Waddy.

Worst of all, every other hotel in Simla was full!

. . . . . .

"Polly, are you afraid of diphtheria?"

"Of nothing in the world except smallpox. Diphtheria kills, but it doesn't disfigure. Why do you ask?"

"Because the Bent baby has got it, and the whole hotel is upside down in consequence. The Waddy has 'set her five young on the rail' and fled. The Dancing Master fears for his precious throat, and that miserable little woman, his wife, has no notion of what ought to be done. She wanted to put it into a mustard bath—for croup!"

"Where did you learn all this?"

"Just now, on the Mall. Dr. Howlen told me. The manager of the hotel is abusing the Bents, and the Bents are abusing the manager. They *are* a feckless couple."

"Well. What's on your mind?"

"This; and I know it's a grave thing to ask. Would you seriously object to my bringing the child over here, with its mother?"

"On the strict understanding that we see nothing of The Dancing Master."

"He will be only too glad to stay away. Polly, you're an angel. The woman really is at her wits' end."

"And you know nothing about her, careless, and would hold her up to public scorn if it gave you a minute's amusement. Therefore you risk

your life for the sake of her brat. No, Loo, *I'm* not the angel. I shall keep to my rooms and avoid her. But do as you please — only tell me why you do it."

Mrs. Hauksbee's eyes softened; she looked out of the window and back into Mrs. Mallowe's face.

"I don't know," said Mrs. Hauksbee simply.

"You dear!"

"Polly!—and for aught you knew you might have taken my fringe off. Never do that again without warning. Now we'll get the rooms ready. I don't suppose I shall be allowed to circulate in society for a month."

"And I also. Thank goodness I shall at last get all the sleep I want."

Much to Mrs. Bent's surprise, she and the baby were brought over to the house almost before she knew where she was. Bent was devoutly and undisguisedly thankful, for he was afraid of the infection, and also hoped that a few weeks in the hotel alone with Mrs. Delville might lead to explanations. Mrs. Bent had thrown her jealousy to the winds in her fear for her child's life.

"We can give you good milk," said Mrs. Hauksbee to her, "and our house is much nearer to the Doctor's than the hotel, and you won't feel as though you were living in a hostile camp. Where is the dear Mrs. Waddy? She seemed to be a particular friend of yours."

"They've all left me," said Mrs. Bent bitterly. "Mrs. Waddy went first. She said I ought to be ashamed of myself for introducing diseases there, and I am *sure* it wasn't my fault that little Dora ——"

"How nice!" cooed Mrs. Hauksbee. "The Waddy is an infectious disease herself — 'more quickly caught than the plague, and the taker runs presently mad.' I lived next door to her at the Elysium, three years ago. Now see, you won't give us the *least* trouble, and I've ornamented all the house with sheets soaked in carbolic. It smells comforting, doesn't it? Remember I'm always in call, and my *ayah's* at your service when yours goes to her meals, and — and — if you cry I'll *never* forgive you."

Dora Bent occupied her mother's unprofitable attention through the day and the night. The Doctor called thrice in the twenty-four hours, and the house reeked with the smell of the Condy's Fluid, chloride-water, and carbolic acid washes. Mrs. Mallowe kept to her own rooms — she considered that she had made sufficient concessions in the cause of humanity — and Mrs. Hauksbee was more esteemed by the Doctor as a help in the sick-room than the half-distraught mother.

"I know nothing of illness," said Mrs. Hauksbee to the Doctor. "Only tell me what to do, and I'll do it."

"Keep that crazy woman from kissing the child, and let her have as little to do with the nursing as you possibly can," said the Doctor; "I'd turn her out of the sick-room, but that I honestly believe she'd die of anxiety. She is less than no good, and I depend on you and the *ayahs*, remember."

Mrs. Hauksbee accepted the responsibility, though it painted olive hollows under her eyes and forced her to her oldest dresses. Mrs. Bent clung to her with more than childlike faith.

"I *know* you'll make Dora well, won't you?" she said at least twenty times a day; and twenty times a day Mrs. Hauksbee answered valiantly, "Of course I will."

But Dora did not improve, and the Doctor seemed to be always in the house.

"There's some danger of the thing taking a bad turn," he said; "I'll come over between three and four in the morning to-morrow."

"Good gracious!" said Mrs. Hauksbee. "He never told me what the turn would be! My education has been horribly neglected; and I have only this foolish mother-woman to fall back upon."

The night wore through slowly, and Mrs. Hauksbee dozed in a chair by the fire. There was a dance at the Viceregal Lodge, and she dreamed of it till she was aware of Mrs. Bent's anxious eyes staring into her own.

"Wake up! Wake up! Do something!" cried Mrs. Bent piteously. "Dora's choking to death! Do you mean to let her die?"

Mrs. Hauksbee jumped to her feet and bent over the bed. The child was fighting for breath, while the mother wrung her hands despairing.

"Oh, what can I do? What can you do? She won't stay still! I can't hold her. Why didn't the Doctor say this was coming?" screamed Mrs. Bent. "*Won't* you help me? She's dying!"

"I — I've never seen a child die before!" stammered Mrs. Hauksbee feebly, and then — let none blame her weakness after the strain of long watching — she broke down, and covered her face with her hands. The *ayahs* on the threshold snored peacefully.

There was a rattle of 'rickshaw wheels below, the clash of an opening door, a heavy step on the stairs, and Mrs. Delville entered to find Mrs. Bent screaming for the Doctor as she ran round the room. Mrs. Hauksbee, her hands to her ears, and her face buried in the chintz of a chair, was quivering with pain at each cry from the bed, and murmuring, "Thank God, I never bore a child! Oh! thank God, I never bore a child!"

Mrs. Delville looked at the bed for an instant, took Mrs. Bent by the shoulders, and said quietly, "Get me some caustic. Be quick."

The mother obeyed mechanically. Mrs. Del-

ville had thrown herself down by the side of the child and was opening its mouth.

"Oh, you're killing her!" cried Mrs. Bent. "Where's the Doctor? Leave her alone!"

Mrs. Delville made no reply for a minute, but busied herself with the child.

"Now the caustic, and hold a lamp behind my shoulder. *Will* you do as you are told? The acid-bottle, if you don't know what I mean," she said.

A second time Mrs. Delville bent over the child. Mrs. Hauksbee, her face still hidden, sobbed and shivered. One of the *ayahs* staggered sleepily into the room, yawning: "Doctor Sahib come."

Mrs. Delville turned her head.

"You're only just in time," she said. "It was chokin' her when I came, an' I've burnt it."

"There was no sign of the membrane getting to the air-passages after the last steaming. It was the general weakness I feared," said the Doctor half to himself, and he whispered as he looked, "You've done what I should have been afraid to do without consultation."

"She was dyin'," said Mrs. Delville, under her breath. "Can you do anythin'? What a mercy it was I went to the dance!"

Mrs. Hauksbee raised her head.

"Is it all over?" she gasped. "I'm useless—

I'm worse than useless! What are *you* doing here?"

She stared at Mrs. Delville, and Mrs. Bent, realising for the first time who was the Goddess from the Machine, stared also.

Then Mrs. Delville made explanation, putting on a dirty long glove, and smoothing a crumpled and ill-fitting ball-dress.

"I was at the dance, an' the Doctor was tellin' me about your baby bein' so ill. So I came away early, an' your door was open, an' I — I — lost my boy this way six months ago, an' I've been tryin' to forget it ever since, an' I — I — I am very sorry for intrudin' an' anythin' that has happened."

Mrs. Bent was putting out the Doctor's eye with a lamp as he stooped over Dora.

"Take it away," said the Doctor. "I think the child will do, thanks to you, Mrs. Delville. *I* should have come too late, but, I assure you"— he was addressing himself to Mrs. Delville — "I had not the faintest reason to expect *this*. The membrane must have grown like a mushroom. Will one of you help me, please?"

He had reason for the last sentence. Mrs. Hauksbee had thrown herself into Mrs. Delville's arms, where she was weeping bitterly, and Mrs. Bent was unpicturesquely mixed up with both, while from the tangle came the sound of many sobs and much promiscuous kissing.

MRS. HAUKSBEE SITS OUT

PERSONS CHIEFLY INTERESTED

His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General of India.
Charles Hilton Hawley (lieutenant at large).
Lieutenant-Colonel J. Scriffshaw (not so much at large).
Major Decker (a persuasive Irishman).
Peroo (an Aryan butler).
Mrs. Hauksbee (a lady with a will of her own).
Mrs. Scriffshaw (a lady who believes she has a will of her own).
May Holt (niece of the above).
Assunta (an Aryan lady's-maid).
Aides-de-Camp, Dancers, Horses, and Devils as Required.

MRS. HAUKSBEE SITS OUT

AN UNHISTORICAL EXTRAVAGANZA

SCENE—*The imperial city of Simla, on a pine-clad mountain seven thousand feet above the level of the sea. Gray roofs of houses peering through green; white clouds going to bed in the valley below; purple clouds of sunset sitting on the peaks above. Smell of wood-smoke and pine-cones. A curtained verandah-room in* MRS. HAUKSBEE'S *house, overlooking Simla, shows* MRS. HAUKSBEE, *in black cachemire tea-gown opening over cream front, seated in a red-cushioned chair, her foot on a Khokand rug, Russian china tea-things on red lacquered table beneath red-shaded lamps. On a cushion at her feet,* MISS HOLT—*gray riding-habit, soft gray felt terai hat, blue and gold puggree, buff gauntlets in lap, and glimpse of spurred riding-boot. They have been talking as the twilight gathers.* MRS. HAUKSBEE *crosses over to piano in a natural pause of the conversation and begins to play.*

MAY. (*Without changing her position.*) Yes. That's nice. Play something.

MRS. H. What?

MAY. Oh! anything. Only I don't want to hear about sighing over tombs, and saying Nevermore.

MRS. H. Have you ever known me do that? May, you're in one of your little tempers this afternoon.

MRS. H. (*Slowly.*) Ye-es. Because *I* choose. Well?

MAY. In the first place, you'll take me under your wing, won't you? And, in the second, you'll keep me there, won't you?

MRS. H. That will depend a great deal on the Hawley Boy's pleasure, won't it?

MAY. (*Flushing.*) Char — Mr. Hawley has nothing whatever to do with it.

MRS. H. Of course not. But what will your aunt say?

MAY. She will be angry with *me*, but not with you. She is pious — oh! so pious! — and she would give anything to be put on that lady's committee for — what is it? — giving pretty dresses to half-caste girls. Lady Bieldar is the secretary, and she won't speak to Aunt on the Mall. You're Lady Bieldar's friend. Aunt daren't quarrel with you, and, besides, if I come here after dinner to-night, how are you to know that everything isn't correct?

MRS. H. On your own pretty head be the talking to! I'm willing to chaperon to an unlimited extent.

MAY. Bless you! and I'll love you *always* for it!

MRS. H. There, again, the Hawley Boy might have something to say. You've been a well-conducted little maiden so far, May. Whence this sudden passion for Volunteer balls? (*Turning*

down lamp and lowering voice as she takes the girl's hand.) Won't you tell me? I'm not very young, but I'm not a grim griffin, and I think I'd understand, dear.

MAY. (*After a pause, and swiftly.*) His leave is nearly ended. He goes down to the plains to his regiment the day after to-morrow, and ——

MRS. H. Has he said anything?

MAY. I don't know. I don't think so. Don't laugh at me, please! But I believe it would nearly break my heart if he didn't.

MRS. H. (*Smiling to herself.*) Poor child! And how long has this been going on?

MAY. Ever so long! Since the beginning of the world — or the beginning of the season. I couldn't help it. I didn't want to help it. And last time we met I was just as rude as I could be — and — and he thought I meant it.

MRS. H. How strange! Seeing that he is a man, too — (*half aloud*) — and probably with experiences of his own!

MAY. (*Dropping* MRS. H.'s *hand.*) I don't believe that, and — I won't. He couldn't!

MRS. H. No, dear. Of course he hasn't had experiences. Why should he? I was only teasing! But when do I pick you up to-night, and how?

MAY. Aunt's dining out somewhere — with goody-goody people. I dine alone with Uncle

John — and he sleeps after dinner. I shall dress then. I simply daren't order my 'rickshaw. The trampling of four coolies in the verandah would wake the dead. I shall have Dandy brought round quietly, and slip away.

MRS. H. But won't riding crumple your frock horribly?

MAY. (*Rising.*) Not in the least, if you know how. I've ridden ten miles to a dance, and come in as fresh as though I had just left my brougham. A plain head hunting-saddle — swing up carefully — throw a waterproof over the skirt and an old shawl over the body, and there you are! Nobody notices in the dark, and Dandy knows when he feels a high heel that he must behave.

MRS. H. And what are you wearing?

MAY. My very, very bestest — slate body, smoke-coloured tulle skirt, and the loveliest steel-worked little shoes that ever were. Mother sent them. She doesn't know Aunt's views. That, and awfully pretty yellow roses — teeny-weeny ones. And you'll wait for me here, won't you — you angel! — at half-past nine? (*Shortens habit and whirls* MRS. H. *down the verandah. Winds up with a kiss.*) There!

MRS. H. (*Holding her at arm's length and looking into her eyes.*) And the next one will be given to ——

MAY. (*Blushing furiously.*) Uncle John — when I get home.

MRS. H. Hypocrite! Go along, and be happy! (*As* MAY *mounts her horse in the garden.*) At half-past nine, then? And can you curl your own wig? But I shall be here to put the last touches to you.

MRS. H. (*In the verandah alone, as the stars come out.*) Poor child! Dear child! And Charley Hawley too! God gie us a guid conceit of oorselves! But I think they are made for each other! I wonder whether that Eurasian dress-reform committee is susceptible of improvements? I wonder whether — O youth, youth!

Enter PEROO, *the butler, with a note on a tray.*

MRS. H. (*Reading.*) "Help! help! help! The decorations are vile — the Volunteers are fighting over them. The roses are just beginning to come in. Mrs. Mallowe has a headache. I am on a step-ladder and the verge of tears! Come and restore order, if you have any regard for me! Bring things and dress; and dine with us.—CONSTANCE." How vexatious! But I must go, I suppose. I *hate* dressing in other people's rooms — and Lady Bieldar takes all the chairs. But I'll tell Assunta to wait for May. (*Passes into house, gives orders, and departs. The clock-hands in the dining-room mark half-past seven.*)

Enter ASSUNTA,

te

ASSUNTA. Pe
to remain on hanc
(*Squats at his side.*)
PEROO. Hah!
ASSUNTA. I do
wish to go to my h
PEROO. Hah!
ASSUNTA. My hou
an urgency that I sho
PEROO. To meet a
ASSUNTA. No—blac
dren, who be honest
of thine?
PEROO. (*Without emot*
thou art a woman of
riage.
ASSUNTA. For this, my
shall break thy lizard's bac
PEROO. For that, I, wh
and trusted in this house,
secure his dismissal, and, o
among the servants of this to
name against ye both. The
lack of employ.
ASSUNTA. (*Fawning.*) That
our is as great as thy influence

BLK. SITS OUT

Enter ASSUNTA, *the lady's-maid, to* PEROO, *squatting on the hearth-rug.*

ASSUNTA. Peroo, there is an order that I am to remain on hand till the arrival of a young lady. (*Squats at his side.*)

PEROO. Hah!

ASSUNTA. I do not desire to wait so long. I wish to go to my house.

PEROO. Hah!

ASSUNTA. My house is in the bazar. There is an urgency that I should go there.

PEROO. To meet a lover?

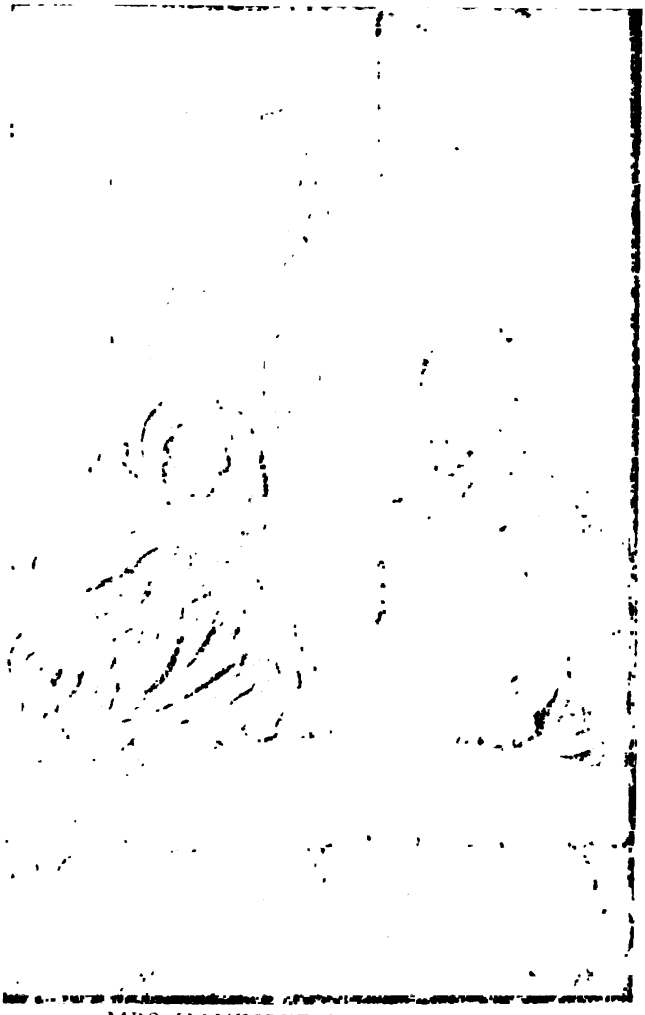
ASSUNTA. No—black beast! To tend my children, who be honest born. Canst thou say that of thine?

PEROO. (*Without emotion.*) That is a lie, and thou art a woman of notoriously immoral carriage.

ASSUNTA. For this, my husband, who is a man, shall break thy lizard's back with a bamboo.

PEROO. For that, I, who am much honoured and trusted in this house, can, by a single word, secure his dismissal, and, owing to my influence among the servants of this town, can raise the bad name against ye both. Then ye will starve for lack of employ.

ASSUNTA. (*Fawning.*) That is true. Thy honour is as great as thy influence, and thou art an



MRS. HAUKSBEE SITS OUT

UNDER THE DEODARS

Enter ASSUNTA, *the lady's-maid, to* PEROO, *squatting on the hearth-rug.*

ASSUNTA. Peroo, there is an order that I am to remain on hand till the arrival of a young lady. (*Squats at his side.*)

PEROO. Hah!

A[illegible] I do [illegible] desire to wait so long. [illegible] e.

H[illegible]

[illegible] is in the bazar. There [illegible] uld go there.

[illegible] lover?

[illegible] black beast! To tend my [illegible] nest born. Canst thou say h[illegible] [illegible]?

PEROO [illegible] That is a lie, a thou [illegible] of notoriously immoral [illegible]

[illegible] for this, my husband, who is a m[illegible] [illegible] lizard's back with a bamboo.

[illegible] I, who am much honour[illegible] [illegible] by a single wo[illegible] [illegible] owing to my influ[illegible] [illegible] can raise the [illegible] [illegible] will starve

[illegible] is true. Thy h[illegible] [illegible] and thou art

Moreover thou art beautiful

esteemed man. Moreover, thou art beautiful; especially as to thy moustachios.

PEROO. So other women, and of higher caste than thou, sweeper's wife, have told me.

ASSUNTA. The moustachios of a fighting-man—of a very swashbuckler! Ahi! Peroo, how many hearts hast thou broken with thy fine face and those so huge moustachios?

PEROO. (*Twirling moustache.*) One or two—two or three. It is a matter of common talk in the bazars. I speak not of the matter myself. (*Hands her betel-nut and lime wrapped in the leaf. They chew in silence.*)

ASSUNTA. Peroo!

PEROO. Hah!

ASSUNTA. I greatly desire to go away, and not to wait.

PEROO. Go, then!

ASSUNTA. But what wilt thou say to the mistress?

PEROO. That thou hast gone.

ASSUNTA. Nay, but thou must say that one came crying with news that my littlest babe was smitten with fever, and that I fled weeping. Else it were not wise to go.

PEROO. Be it so! But I shall need a little tobacco to solace me while I wait for the return of the mistress alone.

ASSUNTA. It shall come; and it shall be of the best. (A snake is a snake, and a bearer is a thiev-

ing ape till he dies!) I go. It was the fever of the child — the littlest babe of all — remember. (And now, if my lover finds I am late, he will beat me, judging that I have been unfaithful.) (*Exit.*)

At half-past nine enter tumultuously MAY, *a heavy shawl over her shoulders, skirt of smoke-coloured tulle showing beneath.*

MAY. Mrs. Hauksbee! Oh! she isn't here. And I dared not get Aunt's *ayah* to help. She would have told Uncle John — and I can't lace it myself. (PEROO *hands note.* MAY *reads.*) "So sorry. Dragged off to put the last touches to the draperies. Assunta will look after you." Sorry! You may well be sorry, wicked woman! Draperies, indeed! You never thought of mine, and — all up the back, too. (*To* PEROO.) Where's Assunta?

PEROO. (*Bowing to the earth.*) By your honoured favour, there came a man but a short time ago crying that the *ayah's* baby was smitten with fever, and she fled, weeping, to tend it. Her house is a mile hence. Is there any order?

MAY. How desperately annoying! (*Looking into fire, her eyes softening.*) Her baby! (*With a little shiver, passing right hand before eyes.*) Poor woman! (*A pause.*) But what am I to do? I can't even

creep into the cloak-room as I am, and trust to some one to put me to rights; and the shawl's a horrid old plaid! Who invented dresses to lace up the back? It must have been a man! I'd like to put him into one! What *am* I to do? Perhaps the Colley-Haughton girls haven't left yet. They're sure to be dining at home. I might run up to their rooms and wait till they came. Eva wouldn't tell, I know. (*Remounts* DANDY, *and rides up the hill to house immediately above, enters glazed hall cautiously, and calls up staircase in an agonized whisper, huddling her shawl about her.*) Jenny! Eva! *Eva!* Jenny! They're out too, and, of course, their *ayah's* gone!

SIR HENRY COLLEY-HAUGHTON. (*Opening door of dining-room, where he has been finishing an after-dinner cigar, and stepping into hall.*) I thought I heard a — Miss Holt! I didn't know you were going with my girls. They've just left.

MAY. (*Confusedly.*) I wasn't. I didn't — that is, it was partly my fault. (*With desperate earnestness.*) Is Lady Haughton in?

SIR HENRY. She's with the girls. Is there anything that I can do? I'm going to the dance in a minute. Perhaps I might ride with you!

MAY. Not for worlds! Not for anything! It was a mistake. I hope the girls are quite well.

SIR HENRY. (*With bland wonder.*) Perfectly, thanks. (*Moves through hall towards horse.*)

MAY. (*Mounting in haste.*) No! Please don't hold my stirrup! I can manage perfectly, thanks! (*Canters out of the garden to side road shadowed by pines. Sees beneath her the lights of Simla town in orderly constellations, and on a bare ridge the illuminated bulk of the Simla Town-hall, shining like a cut-paper transparency. The main road is firefly-lighted with the moving 'rickshaw lamps all climbing towards the Town-hall. The wind brings up a few bars of a waltz. A monkey in the darkness of the wood wakes and croons dolefully.*) And now, where in the world am I to go? May, you bad girl! This all comes of disobeying aunts and wearing dresses that lace up the back, and — trusting Mrs. Hauksbee. Everybody is going. I must wait a little till that crowd has thinned. Perhaps — perhaps Mrs. Lefevre might help me. It's a horrid road to her poky little house, but she's very kind, even if she is pious. (*Thrusts* DANDY *along an almost inaccessible path; halts in the shadow of a clump of rhododendron, and watches the lighted windows of* MRS. LEFEVRE'S *small cottage.*) Oh! horror! so that's where Aunt is dining! Back, Dandy, back! Dandy, dearest, step softly! (*Regains road, panting.*) I'll never forgive Mrs. Hauksbee! — never! And there's the band beginning "God Save the Queen," and that means the Viceroy has come; and Charley will think I've disappointed him on purpose, because I was so rude last time. And

I'm all but ready. Oh! it's cruel, cruel! I'll go home, and I'll go straight to bed, and Charley may dance with any other horrid girl he likes! (*The last of the 'ricksbaw lights pass her as she reaches the main road. Clatter of stones overhead and squeak of a saddle as a big horse picks his way down a steep path above, and a robust baritone chants*)—

> Our King went forth to Normandie
> With power of might and chivalry;
> The Lord for him wrought wondrously,
> Therefore now may England cry,
> Deo Gratias!

Swings into main road, and the young moon shows a glimpse of the cream and silver of the Deccan Irregular Horse uniform under rider's opened cloak.

MAY. (*Leaning forward and taking reins short.*) That's Charley! What a splendid voice! Just like a big, strong angel's! I wonder what he is so happy about? How he sits his horse! And he hasn't anything round his neck, and he'll catch his death of cold! If he sees me riding in this direction, he may stop and ask me why, and I can't explain. Fate's against me to-night. I'll canter past quickly. Bless you, Charley! (*Canters up the main road, under the shadow of the pines, as* HAWLEY *canters down.* DANDY'S *hoofs keep the tune "There was never a daughter of Eve," etc.* ALL

off shoulder to DANDY'S *side.*) My fault entirely. (It comes easily now.) Not much hurt, are you (*leaning off side, and putting his arm round her*), my May? It's awfully mean, I know, but I meant to speak weeks ago, only you never gave a fellow the chance —'specially last time. (*Moistens his lips.*) I'm not fit — I'm utterly — (*in a gruff whisper*) — I'm utterly unworthy, and — and you aren't angry, May, are you? I thought you might have cared a little bit. *Do* you care, darl——?

MAY. (*Her head falling on his right shoulder. The arm tightens.*) Oh! don't — don't!

HAWLEY. (*Nearly tumbling off his horse.*) Only one, darling. We can talk at the dance.

MAY. But I can't go to the dance!

HAWLEY. (*Taking another promptly as head is raised.*) Nonsense! You *must*, dear, now. Remember I go down to my Regiment the day after to-morrow, and I sha'n't see you again. (*Catches glimpse of steel-gray slipper in stirrup.*) Why, you're dressed for it!

MAY. Yes, but I can't go! I've — torn my dress.

HAWLEY. Run along and put on a new one; only be quick. Shall I wait here?

MAY. No! Go away! Go at once!

HAWLEY. You'll find me opposite the cloak-room.

MAY. Yes, yes! Anything! Good-night!

HAWLEY *canters up the road, and the song breaks out again fortissimo.*

MAY. (*Absently, picking up reins.*) Yes, indeed. My king went forth to Normandie; and—I shall never get there. Let me think, though! Let me think! It's all over now—all over! I wonder what I ought to have said! I wonder what I did say! Hold up, Dandy; you need some one to order you about. It's nice to have some one nice to order you about. (*Flicks horse, who capers.*) Oh, don't jiggit, Dandy! I feel so trembly and faint. But I sha'n't see him for ever so long. . . . But we understand now. (DANDY *turns down path to* MRS. SCRIFFSHAW'S *house.*) And I wanted to go to the dance so much before, and now I want to go worse than ever! (*Dismounts, runs into house, and weeps with her head on the drawing-room table.*)

Enter SCRIFFSHAW, *grizzled Lieutenant-Colonel.*

SCRIFFSHAW. May! Bless my soul, what's all this? What's all this? (*Shawl slips.*) And, bless my soul, what's all *this?*

MAY. N-nothing. Only I'm miserable and wretched.

SCRIFFSHAW. But where have you been? I thought you were in your own room.

MAY. (*With icy desperation.*) I was, till you had

MAY. Oh, Uncle John! you look perfectly delightful — and so martial, too!

SCRIFFSHAW. I was martial once. Suppose your aunt came in? Let me see if I can lace those things of yours. That's too tight — eh?

MAY. No! Much, much tighter. You must bring the edges together. Indeed you must. And lace it *quick!* Oh! what if Aunt should come? Tie it in a knot! Any sort of knot.

SCRIFFSHAW. (*Lacing bodice after a fashion of his own devising.*) Yes — yes! I see! Confound! That's all right! (*They pass into the garden and mount their horses.*) Let go her head! By Jove, May, how well you ride!

MAY. (*As they race through the shadows neck and neck.*) (Small blame to me. I'm riding to my love.) Go along, Dandy boy! Wasn't that Aunt's 'rickshaw that passed just now? She'll come to the dance and fetch us back.

SCRIFFSHAW. (*After the gallop.*) Who cares?

SCENE.—*Main ball-room of the Simla Town-hall; dancing-floor grooved and tongued teak, vaulted roof, and gallery round the walls. Four hundred people dispersed in couples. Banners, bayonet-stars on walls; red and gold, blue and gold, chocolate, buff, rifle-green, black, and other uniforms under glare of a few hundred lamps. Cloak- and supper-rooms at the sides, with alleys leading to Chinese-lanterned verandahs.* HAWLEY, *at entrance, receives* MAY *as she drops from her horse and passes towards cloak-room.*

HAWLEY. (*As he pretends to rearrange shawl.*) Oh, my love, my love, my love!

MAY. (*Her eyes on the ground.*) Let me go and get these things off. I'm trying to control my eyes, but it is written on my face. (*Dashes into cloak-room.*)

NEWLY MARRIED WIFE OF CAPTAIN OF ENGINEERS TO HUSBAND. No need to ask what has happened *there*, Dick.

HUSBAND. No, bless 'em both, whoever they are!

HAWLEY. (*Under his breath.*) Damn his impertinence!

MAY *comes from cloak-room, having completely forgotten to do more than look at her face and hair in the glass.*

HAWLEY. Here's the programme, dear!

MAY. (*Returning it with pretty gesture of surrender.*) Here's the programme — dear!

HAWLEY *draws line from top to bottom, initials, and returns card.*

MAY. You can't! It's perfectly awful! But — I should have been angry if you hadn't. (*Taking his arm.*) Is it wrong to say that?

HAWLEY. It sounds delicious. We can sit out all the squares and dance all the round dances.

There are heaps of square dances at Volunteer balls. Come along!

MAY. One minute! I want to tell my chaperon something.

HAWLEY. Come along! You belong to me now.

MAY. (*Her eyes seeking* MRS. HAUKSBEE, *who is seated on an easy-chair by an alcove.*) But it was so awfully sudden!

HAWLEY. My dear infant! When a girl throws herself literally into a man's arms ——

MAY. I didn't! Dandy shied.

HAWLEY. Don't shy to conclusions. That man is never going to let her go. Come!

MAY *catches* MRS. H.'s *eye. Telegraphs a volume, and receives by return two. Turns to go with* HAWLEY.

MRS. H. (*As she catches sight of back of* MAY's *dress.*) Oh, horror! Assunta shall die to-morrow! (*Sees* SCRIFFSHAW *fluctuating uneasily among the chaperons, and following his niece's departure with the eye of an artist.*)

MRS. H. (*Furiously.*) Colonel Scriffshaw, you —*you* did that?

SCRIFFSHAW. (*Imbecilely.*) The lacing? Yes. I think it will hold.

MRS. H. You monster! Go and tell her. No,

don't! (*Falling back in chair.*) I have lived to see every proverb I believed in a lie. The maid has forgotten her attire! (What a handsome couple they make! Anyhow, he doesn't care, and she doesn't know.) How did *you* come here, Colonel Scriffshaw?

SCRIFFSHAW. Strictly against orders. (*Uneasily.*) I'm afraid I shall have my wife looking for me.

MRS. H. I fancy you will. (*Sees reflection of herself in the mirrors — black-lace dinner dress, blood-red poinsettia at shoulder and girdle to secure single bruce of black lace. Silver shoes, silver-handled black fan.*) (You're looking pretty to-night, dear. I wish your husband were here.) (*Aloud, to drift of expectant men.*) No, no, no! For the hundredth time, Mrs. Hauksbee is not dancing this evening. (Her hands are full, or she is in error. Now, the chances are that I sha'n't see May again till it is time to go, and I may see Mrs. Scriffshaw at any moment.) Colonel, *will* you take me to the supper-room? The hall's chilly without perpetual soups. (*Goes out on* COLONEL'S *arm. Passing the cloak-room, sees portion of* MRS. SCRIFFSHAW'S *figure.*) (Before me the Deluge!) If I were you, Colonel Scriffshaw, I'd go to the whist-room, and — stay there. (S. *follows the line of her eye, and blanches as he flies.*) She *has* come — to — take them home, and she is quite capable of it. What shall I do? (*Looks across the supper-tables. Sees* MAJOR DECKER, *a big*

black-haired Irishman, and attacks him among the meringues.) Major Decker! Dear Major Decker! If ever I was a friend of yours, help me now!

MAJOR D. I will indeed. What is it?

MRS. H. (*Walking him back deftly in the direction of the cloak-room door.*) I want you to be very kind to a very dear friend of mine — a Mrs. Scriffshaw. She doesn't come to dances much, and, being very sensitive, she feels neglected if no one asks her to dance. She really waltzes divinely, though you might not think it. There she is, walking out of the cloak-room now, in the high dress. *Please* come and be introduced. (*Under her eyelashes.*) You're an Irishman, Major, and you've got a way with you. (*Planting herself in front of* MRS. S.) Mrs. Scriffshaw, may I wah-wah-wah Decker? — wah-wah-wah Decker? — Mrs. Scuffles. (*Flies hastily.*) Saved for a moment! And now, if I can enlist the Viceroy on my side, I may do something.

MAJOR D. (*To* MRS. S.) The pleasure of a dance with you, Mrs. Scruffun?

MRS. SCRIFFSHAW. (*Backing, and filling in the doorway.*) Sirr!

MAJOR D. (*Smiling persuasively.*) You've forgotten me, I see! I had the pleasure o' meeting you — (there's missionary in every line o' that head) — at — at — the last Presbyterian Conference.

MRS. S. (*Strict Wesleyan Methodist.*) I was never there.

refuge; girl with her lover, who goes down the day after to-morrow; and *she* is loose. She will be neither to hold nor to bind after the Major's onslaught, save by you. And on a committee —she really would ——

His Excellency. I see. I am penetrated with an interest in Eurasian dress reform. I never felt so alive to the importance of committees before. (*Screwing up his eyes to see across the room.*) But pardon me—my sight is not so good as it has been—which of that line of Mothers in Israel do I attack! The wearied one who is protesting with a fan against this scene of riot and dissipation?

Mrs. H. Can you doubt for a moment? I'm afraid your task is a heavy one, but the happiness of two ——

His Excellency. (*Wearily.*) Hundred and fifty million souls? Ah, yes! And yet they say a Viceroy is overpaid. Let us advance. It will not talk to me about its husband's unrecognised merits, will it? You have no idea how inevitably the conversation drifts in that direction when I am left alone with a lady. They tell me of Poor Tom, or Dear Dick, or Persecuted Paul, before I have time to explain that these things are really regulated by my Secretaries. On my honour, I sometimes think that the ladies of India are polyandrous!

MRS. H. Would it be so difficult to credit that they love their husbands?

HIS EXCELLENCY. That also is possible. One of your many claims to my regard is that you have never mentioned your husband.

MRS. H. (*Sweetly.*) No; and as long as he is where he is, I have not the least intention of doing so.

HIS EXCELLENCY. (*As they approach the row of eminently self-conscious chaperons.*) And, by the way, where is he?

MRS. H. *lays her fan lightly over her heart, bows her head, and moves on.*

HIS EXCELLENCY. (*As the chaperons become more self-conscious, drifting to vacant chair at* MRS. S.'s *side.*) That also is possible. I do not recall having seen him elsewhere, at any rate. (*Watching* MRS. S.) How very like twenty thousand people that I could remember if I had time! (*Glides into vacant chair.* MRS. S. *colours to the temples; chaperons exchange glances. In a voice of strained honey.*) May I be pardoned for attacking you so brusquely on matters of public importance, Mrs. Scriffshaw? But my times are not my own, and I have heard so much about the good work you carry on so successfully. (When she has quite recovered I may learn what that work was.)

MRS. S., *in tones meant for the benefit of all the chaperons, discourses volubly, with little gasps, of her charitable mission work.*

HIS EXCELLENCY. How interesting! Of course, quite natural! What we want most on our dress reform committee is a firm hand and enormous local knowledge. Men are *so* tactless. You have been too proud, Mrs. Scriffshaw, to offer us your help in that direction. So, you see, I come to ask it as a favour. (*Gives* MRS. S. *to understand that the Eurasian dress reform committee cannot live another hour without her help and comfort.*)

FIRST AIDE. (*By doorway within eye-reach of* HIS EXCELLENCY.) What in the world is His Excellency tackling now?

SECOND AIDE. (*In attitude of fascination.*) Looks as if it had been a woman once. Anyhow, it isn't amusing him. I know that smile when he is in acute torment.

MRS. H. (*Coming up behind him.*) "Now the Serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field!"

SECOND AIDE. (*Turning.*) Ah! Your programme full, of course, Mrs. Hauksbee?

MRS. H. I'm not dancing, and you should have asked me before. You Aides have no manners.

FIRST AIDE. You must excuse him. Hugh's a blighted being. He's watching somebody dance with somebody else, and somebody's wanting to dance with him.

MRS. H. (*Keenly, under her eyebrows.*) You're too young for that rubbish.

SECOND AIDE. It's his imagination. *He*'s all right, but Government House duty is killing me. My heart's in the plains with a dear little, fat little, lively little nine-foot tiger. I want to sit out over that kill instead of watching over His Excellency.

MRS. H. Don't they let the Aides out to play, then?

SECOND AIDE. Not me. I've got to do most of Duggy's work while he runs after ——

MRS. H. Never mind! A discontented Aide is a perpetual beast. One of you boys will take me to a chair, and then leave me. No, I don't want the delights of your conversation.

SECOND AIDE. (*As first goes off.*) When Mrs. Hauksbee is attired in holy simplicity it generally means — larks!

HIS EXCELLENCY. (*To* MRS. SCRIFFSHAW.) . . . And so we all wanted to see more of you. I felt I was taking no liberty when I dashed into affairs of State at so short a notice. It was with the greatest difficulty I could find you. Indeed, I hardly believed my eyes when I saw you waltzing so divinely just now. (She will first protest, and next perjure herself.)

MRS. S. (*Weakly.*) But I assure you ——

HIS EXCELLENCY. My eyes are not so old that they cannot recognise a good dancer when they see one.

MRS. S. (*With a simper.*) But only once in a way, Your Excellency.

HIS EXCELLENCY. (Of course.) That is too seldom — much too seldom. You should set our younger folk an example. These slow swirling waltzes are tiring. I prefer — as I see you do — swifter measures.

MAJOR D. (*Entering main door in strict charge of* SCRIPPSHAW, *who fears the judgment.*) Yes! she sent me to look for you, after giving me *the* dance of the evening. I'll never forget it!

SCRIPPSHAW. (*His jaw dropping.*) My — wife — danced — with — *you!* I mean — anybody!

MAJOR D. Anybody! Aren't I somebody enough? (*Looking across room.*) Faith! you're right, though! There she is in a corner, flirting with the Viceroy! I was not good enough for her. Well, it's no use to interrupt 'em.

SCRIPPSHAW. Certainly not! We'll — we'll get a drink and go back to the whist-rooms. (Alice must be mad! At any rate, I'm safe, I suppose.)

HIS EXCELLENCY *rises and fades away from* MRS. SCRIPPSHAW'S *side after a long and particular pressure of the hand.* MRS. S. *throws herself back in her chair with the air of one surfeited with similar attentions, and the chaperons begin to talk.*

HIS EXCELLENCY. (*Leaning over* MRS. H.'S *chair with an absolutely expressionless countenance.*) She is

a truly estimable lady — one that I shall count it an honour to number among my friends. No! she will not move from her place, because I have expressed a hope that, a little later on in the dance, we may renew our very interesting conversation. And now, if I could only get my boys together, I think I would go home. Have you seen any Aide who looked as though a Viceroy belonged to him?

MRS. H. The feet of the young men are at the door without. You leave early.

HIS EXCELLENCY. Have I not done enough?

MRS. H. (*Half rising from her chair.*) Too much, alas! Too much! Look!

HIS EXCELLENCY. (*Regarding* MRS. SCRIFFSHAW, *who has risen and is moving towards a side door.*) How interesting! By every law known to me she should have waited in that chair — such a comfortable chair — for my too tardy return. But now she is loose! How has this happened?

MRS. H. (*Half to herself, shutting and opening fan.*) She is looking for May! I know it! Oh! why wasn't she isolated? One of those women has taken revenge on Mrs. Scriffshaw's new glory — *you* — by telling her that May has been sitting out too much with Mr. Hawley.

HIS EXCELLENCY. Blame me! Always blame a Viceroy! (MRS. H. *moves away.*) What are you meditating?

MRS. H. Following — watching — administering — anything! I fly! I know where they are!

HIS EXCELLENCY. The plot thickens! May I come to administer?

MRS. H. (*Over her shoulder.*) If you can!

MRS. H. *flies down a darkened corridor speckled with occasional Chinese lanterns, and establishes herself behind a pillar as* MRS. S. *sweeps by to the darkest end, where* MAY *and* HAWLEY *are sitting very close together.* HIS EXCELLENCY *follows* MRS. H.

MRS. S. (*To both the invisibles.*) Well!

HIS EXCELLENCY. (*To* MRS. H. *in a whisper.*) Now, I should be afraid. I should run away.

MRS. S. (*In a high-pitched voice of the matron.*) May, go to the cloak-room at once, and wait till I come. I wonder you expect any one to speak to you after this! (MAY *hurries down corridor very considerably agitated.*)

HIS EXCELLENCY. (*As* MAY *passes, slightly raising his voice, and with all the deference due to half a dozen Duchesses.*) May an old man be permitted to offer you his arm, my dear? (*To* MRS. H.) I entreat — I *command* you to delay the catastrophe till I return!

MRS. H. (*Plunging into the darkness, and halting before a dead wall.*) Oh! I thought there was a way round! (*Pretends to discover the two.*) Mrs. Scriffshaw and Mr. Hawley! (*With exaggerated em-*

phasis.) Mrs. Scriffshaw — Oh! *Mrs.* Scriffshaw! — how truly shocking! What will that dear, good husband of yours say? (*Smothered chuckle from* HAWLEY, *who otherwise preserves silence. Snorts of indignation from* MRS. S.)

MRS. H (*Hidden by pillar of observation.*) Now, in any other woman that would have been possibly weak — certainly vulgar. But I think it has answered the purpose.

HIS EXCELLENCY. (*Returning, and taking up his post at her side.*) Poor little girl! She was shaking all over. What an enormous amount of facile emotion exists in the young! What is about to ——

MRS. S. (*In a rattling whisper to* HAWLEY.) Take me to some quieter place.

HAWLEY. On my word, you seem to be accustomed to *very* quiet places. I'm sorry I don't know any more secluded nook; but if you have anything to say ——

MRS. S. Say, indeed! I wish you to understand that I consider your conduct abominable, sir!

HAWLEY. (*In level, expressionless voice.*) Yes? Explain yourself.

MRS. S. In the first place, you meet my niece at an entertainment of which I utterly disapprove ——

HAWLEY. To the extent of dancing with Major

Decker, the most notorious loose fish in the whole room? Yes.

MRS. S. (*Hotly.*) That was not my fault. It was entirely against my inclination.

HAWLEY. It takes two to make a waltz. Presumably, you are capable of expressing your wishes —are you not?

MRS. S. I did. It was—only—and I couldn't——

HAWLEY. (*Relentlessly.*) Well, it's a most serious business. I've been talking it over with May.

MRS. S. May!

HAWLEY. Yes, May; and she has assured me that you do not do—er—this sort of thing often. She *assured* me of that.

MRS. S. But by what right——

HAWLEY. You see, May has promised to marry me, and one can't be too careful about one's connections.

HIS EXCELLENCY. (*To* MRS. H.) That young man will go far! This is invention indeed.

MRS. H. He seems to have marched some paces already. (Blessed be the chance that led me to the Major! I can always say that I meant it.)

MRS. S. May has promised . . . this is worse than ever! And *I* was not consulted!

HAWLEY. If I had known the precise hour, you know, I might possibly have chosen to take you into my confidence.

MRS. S. May should have told *me*.

HAWLEY. You mustn't worry May about it. Is that perfectly clear to you?

HIS EXCELLENCY. (*To* MRS. H.) What a singularly flat, hopeless tone he has chosen to talk in—as if he were speaking to a coolie from a distance.

MRS. H. Yes. It's the one note that will rasp through her overstrained nerves.

HIS EXCELLENCY. You know him well?

MRS. H. I trained him.

HIS EXCELLENCY. Then *she* collapses.

MRS. H. If she does not, all my little faith in man is gone for ever.

MRS. S. (*To* HAWLEY.) This is perfectly monstrous! It's conduct utterly unworthy of a *man*, much less a gentleman. What do *I* know of you, or your connections, or your means?

HAWLEY. Nothing. How could you?

MRS. S. How could I? . . . Because — because I insist on knowing!

HAWLEY. Then am I to understand that you are anxious to marry me? Suppose we talk to the Colonel about that?

HIS EXCELLENCY. (*To* MRS. H.) Very far, indeed, will that young man go.

MRS. S. (*Almost weeping with anger.*) Will you let me pass? I — I want to go away. I've no language at my command that could convey to you ——

HAWLEY. Then surely it would be better to wait here till the inspiration comes?

MRS. S. But this is insolence!

HAWLEY. You must remember that you drove May, who, by the way, is a woman, out of this place like a hen. That was insolence, Mrs. Scriff-shaw — to her.

MRS. S. To her? She's my husband's sister's child.

HAWLEY. And she is going to do me the honour of carrying my name. I am accountable to your husband's sister in Calcutta. Sit down, please!

HIS EXCELLENCY. She will positively assault him in a minute. I can hear her preparing for a spring.

MRS. H. He will be able to deal with that too, if it happens. (I trained him. Bear witness, heaven and earth, I trained him, that his tongue should guard his head with my sex.)

MRS. S. (*Feebly.*) What shall I do? What *can* I do? (*Through her teeth.*) I hate you!

HIS EXCELLENCY. (*Critically.*) Weak. The end approaches.

MRS. S. *You're* not the sort of man I should have chosen for anybody's husband.

HAWLEY. I can't say your choice seems particularly select — Major Decker, for instance. And believe me, you are not required to choose husbands for anybody.

MRS. SCRIFFSHAW *looses all the double-thonged lightnings of her tongue, condemns* HAWLEY *as no gentleman, an impostor, possibly a bigamist, a defaulter, and every other unpleasant character she has ever read of; announces her unalterable intention of refusing to recognise the engagement, and of harrying* MAY *tooth and talon; and renews her request to be allowed to pass. No answer.*

HIS EXCELLENCY. What a merciful escape! She might have attacked me on the chairs in this fashion. What will he do now?

MRS. H. I have faith — illimitable faith.

MRS. S. (*At the end of her resources.*) Well, what have you to say?

HAWLEY. (*In a placid and most insinuating drawl.*) Aunt Alice — give — me — a — kiss.

HIS EXCELLENCY. Beautiful! Oh! thrice beautiful! And my Secretaries never told me there were men like this in the Empire.

MRS. S. (*Bewilderedly, beginning to sob.*) Why — why *should* I?

HAWLEY. Because you will make — you really will — a delightful aunt-in-law, and it will save such a lot of trouble when May and I are married, and you have to accept me as a relation.

MRS. S. (*Weeping gently.*) But — but you're taking the management of affairs into your own hands.

HAWLEY. Quite so. They are my own affairs. And do you think that my aunt is competent to manage other people's affairs when she doesn't know whether she means to dance or sit out, and when she chooses the very worst ——

MRS. S. (*Appealingly.*) Oh, don't — don't! Please, don't! (*Bursts into tears.*)

HIS EXCELLENCY. (*To* MRS. H.) Unnecessarily brutal, surely? She's crying.

MRS. H. No! It's nothing. We all cry — even the worst of us.

HAWLEY. Well?

MRS. S. (*Snuffling, with a rustle.*) There!

HAWLEY. No, no, no! I said give it to me! (*It is given.*)

HIS EXCELLENCY. (*Carried away.*) And I? What am I doing here, pretending to govern India, while that man languishes in a lieutenant's uniform?

MRS. H. (*Speaking very swiftly and distinctly.*) It rests with Your Excellency to raise him to honour. He should go down the day after to-morrow. A month at Simla, now, would mean Paradise to him, and one of your Aides is dying for a little tiger-shooting.

HIS EXCELLENCY. But would such an Archangel of Insolence condescend to run errands for me?

MRS. H. You can but try.

HIS EXCELLENCY. I shall be afraid of him; but

we'll see if we can get the Commander-in-Chief to lend him to me.

HAWLEY. (*To* MRS. S.) There, there, there! It's nothing to make a fuss about, is it? Come along, Aunt Alice, and I'll tuck you into your 'rickshaw, and you shall go home quite comfy, and the Colonel and I will bring May home later. I go down to my regiment the day after to-morrow, worse luck! So you won't have me long to trouble you. But we quite understand each other, don't we? (*Emerges from the darkness, very tenderly escorting the very much shaken* MRS. SCRIFFSHAW.)

HIS EXCELLENCY. (*To* MRS. H. *as the captive passes.*) I feel as if I ought to salute that young man; but I must go to the ball-room. Send him to me as soon as you can. (*Drifts in direction of music.* HAWLEY *returns to* MRS. H.)

HAWLEY. (*Mopping his forehead.*) Phew! I have had easier duties.

MRS. H. How could you? How dared you? I builded better than I knew. It was cruel, but it was superb.

HAWLEY. Who taught me? Where's May?

MRS. H. In the cloak-room — being put to rights — I fervently trust.

HAWLEY. (*Guiltily.*) They wear their fringes so low on their foreheads that one can't ——

MRS. H. (*Laughing.*) Oh, you goose! That wasn't it. His Excellency wants to speak to you!

(HAWLEY *turns to ball-room as* MRS. H. *flings herself down in a chair.*)

MRS. H. (*Alone.*) For two seasons, at intervals, I formed the infant mind. Heavens, how raw he was in the beginning! And never once throughout his schooling did he disappoint you, dear. Never once, by word or look or sign, did he have the unspeakable audacity to fall in love with you. No, he chose his maiden, then he stopped his confidences, and conducted his own wooing, and in open fight slew his aunt-in-law. But he never, being a wholesome, dear, delightful boy, fell in love with you, Mrs. Hauksbee; and I wonder whether you liked it or whether you didn't. Which? . . . You certainly never gave him a chance . . . but that was the very reason why . . . (*Half aloud.*) Mrs. Hauksbee, you are an idiot!

Enters main ball-room just in time to see HIS EXCELLENCY *conferring with* HAWLEY, AIDES *in background.*

HIS EXCELLENCY. Have you any very pressing employment in the plains, Mr. Hawley?

HAWLEY. Regimental duty. Native Cavalry, sir.

HIS EXCELLENCY. And, of course, you are anxious to return at once?

HAWLEY. Not in the least, sir.

HIS EXCELLENCY. Do you think you could relieve one of my boys here for a month?

HAWLEY. Most certainly, sir.

SECOND AIDE. (*Behind* VICEROY'S *shoulders, shouting in dumb show.*) My tiger! My tiger! My tigerling!

HIS EXCELLENCY. (*Lowering his voice and regarding* HAWLEY *between his eyes.*) But could we trust you — ahem! — not to insist on ordering kisses at inopportune moments from — people?

HAWLEY. (*Dropping eyes.*) Not when I'm on duty, sir.

HIS EXCELLENCY. (*Turning.*) Then I'll speak to the Commander-in-Chief about it.

MRS. H. (*As she sees gratified expression of the* VICEROY'S *and* HAWLEY'S *lowered eyes.*) I am sometimes sorry that I am a woman, but I'm very glad that I'm not a man, and — I shouldn't care to be an angel. (MRS. SCRIFFSHAW *and* MAY *pass — the latter properly laced, the former regarding the lacing.*) So that's settled at last. (*To* MRS. S.) Your husband, Mrs. Scriffshaw? Yes, I know. But don't be too hard on him. Perhaps he never did it, after all.

MRS. S. (*With a grunt of infinite contempt.*) Mrs. Hauksbee, that man has tried to lace *me!*

MRS. H. (Then he's bolder than I thought. She will avenge all her outrages on the Colonel.) May, come and talk to me a moment, dear.

FIRST AIDE. (*To* HAWLEY, *as the* VICEROY *drifts away.*) Knighted on the field of battle, by Jove! What the deuce have you been doing to His Excellency?

SECOND AIDE. I'll bet on it that Mrs. Hauksbee is at the bottom of this, somehow. I told her what I wanted, and ——

HAWLEY. Never look a gift tiger in the mouth. It's apt to bite. (*Departs in search of* MAY.)

HIS EXCELLENCY. (*To* MRS. H. *as he passes her sitting out with* MAY.) No, I am not so afraid of your young friend. Have I done well?

MRS. H. Exceedingly. (*In a whisper, including* MAY.) She is a pretty girl, isn't she?

HIS EXCELLENCY. (*Regarding mournfully, his chin on his breast.*) O youth, youth, youth! *Si la jeunesse savait — si la vieillesse pouvait.*

MRS. H. (*Incautiously.*) Yes, but in this case we have seen that youth did know quite as much as was good for it, and —— (*Stops.*)

HIS EXCELLENCY. And age had power, and used it. Sufficient reward, perhaps; but I hardly expected the reminder from *you.*

MRS. H. No. I won't try to excuse it. Perhaps the slip is as well, for it reminds me that I am but mortal, and in watching *you* controlling the destinies of the universe I thought I was as the gods!

HIS EXCELLENCY. Thank you! I go to be

taken away. But it has been an interesting evening.

SCRIFFSHAW. (*Very much disturbed after the* VICEROY *has passed on, to* MRS. H.) Now, what in the world was wrong with my lacing? My wife didn't appear angry about my bringing May here. I'm informed she danced several dances herself. But she — she gave it me awfully in the supper-room for my — ahem! — lady's-maid's work. Fearfully she gave it me! What was wrong? It held, didn't it?

MAY. (*From her chair.*) It was beautiful, Uncle John. It was the best thing in the world you could have done. Never mind. I forgive you. (*To* HAWLEY, *behind her.*) No, Charley. No more dances for just a little while. Ask Mrs. Hauksbee now.

Alarums and Excursions. The ball-room is rent in twain as the VICEROY, AIDES, *etc., file out between Lines of Volunteers and Uniforms.*

BAND IN THE GALLERY —

God save our gracious Queen,
Heaven bless our noble Queen,
God save the Queen!
Send her victorious,
Happy and glorious,
Long to reign over us,
God save the Queen!

HAWLEY. (*Behind* MRS. H's *chair.*) Amen, your Imperial Majesty!

MRS. H. (*Looking up, head thrown back on left shoulder.*) Thank you! Yes, you can have the next if you want it. Mrs. Hauksbee isn't sitting out any more.

A WAYSIDE COMEDY

Because to every purpose there is time and judgment, therefore the misery of man is great upon him.—*Eccles.* viii. 6.

FATE and the Government of India have turned the Station of Kashima into a prison; and, because there is no help for the poor souls who are now lying there in torment, I write this story, praying that the Government of India may be moved to scatter the European population to the four winds.

Kashima is bounded on all sides by the rock-tipped circle of the Dosehri hills. In Spring, it is ablaze with roses; in Summer, the roses die and the hot winds blow from the hills; in Autumn, the white mists from the *jhils* cover the place as with water, and in Winter the frosts nip everything young and tender to earth-level. There is but one view in Kashima — a stretch of perfectly flat pasture and plough-land, running up to the gray-blue scrub of the Dosehri hills.

There are no amusements, except snipe and tiger shooting; but the tigers have been long since hunted from their lairs in the rock-caves, and the

snipe only come once a year. Narkarra—one hundred and forty-three miles by road—is the nearest station to Kashima. But Kashima never goes to Narkarra, where there are at least twelve English people. It stays within the circle of the Dosehri hills.

All Kashima acquits Mrs. Vansuythen of any intention to do harm; but all Kashima knows that she, and she alone, brought about their pain.

Boulte, the Engineer, Mrs. Boulte, and Captain Kurrell know this. They are the English population of Kashima, if we except Major Vansuythen, who is of no importance whatever, and Mrs. Vansuythen, who is the most important of all.

You must remember, though you will not understand, that all laws weaken in a small and hidden community where there is no public opinion. When a man is absolutely alone in a Station he runs a certain risk of falling into evil ways. This risk is multiplied by every addition to the population up to twelve—the Jury-number. After that, fear and consequent restraint begin, and human action becomes less grotesquely jerky.

There was deep peace in Kashima till Mrs. Vansuythen arrived. She was a charming woman, every one said so everywhere; and she charmed every one. In spite of this, or, perhaps, because of this, since Fate is so perverse, she cared only for one man, and he was Major Vansuythen. Had

she been plain or stupid, this matter would have been intelligible to Kashima. But she was a fair woman, with very still gray eyes, the colour of a lake just before the light of the sun touches it. No man who had seen those eyes could, later on, explain what fashion of woman she was to look upon. The eyes dazzled him. Her own sex said that she was "not bad looking, but spoilt by pretending to be so grave." And yet her gravity was natural. It was not her habit to smile. She merely went through life, looking at those who passed; and the women objected while the men fell down and worshipped.

She knows and is deeply sorry for the evil she has done to Kashima; but Major Vansuythen cannot understand why Mrs. Boulte does not drop in to afternoon tea at least three times a week. "When there are only two women in one Station, they ought to see a great deal of each other," says Major Vansuythen.

Long and long before ever Mrs. Vansuythen came out of those far-away places where there is society and amusement, Kurrell had discovered that Mrs. Boulte was the one woman in the world for him and—you dare not blame them. Kashima was as out of the world as Heaven or the Other Place, and the Dosehri hills kept their secret well. Boulte had no concern in the matter. He was in camp for a fortnight at a time. He was a hard,

heavy man, and neither Mrs. Boulte nor Kurrell pitied him. They had all Kashima and each other for their very, very own; and Kashima was the Garden of Eden in those days. When Boulte returned from his wanderings he would slap Kurrell between the shoulders and call him "old fellow," and the three would dine together. Kashima was happy then when the judgment of God seemed almost as distant as Narkarra or the railway that ran down to the sea. But the Government sent Major Vansuythen to Kashima, and with him came his wife.

The etiquette of Kashima is much the same as that of a desert island. When a stranger is cast away there, all hands go down to the shore to make him welcome. Kashima assembled at the masonry platform close to the Narkarra Road, and spread tea for the Vansuythens. That ceremony was reckoned a formal call, and made them free of the Station, its rights and privileges. When the Vansuythens were settled down, they gave a tiny house-warming to all Kashima; and that made Kashima free of their house, according to the immemorial usage of the Station.

Then the Rains came, when no one could go into camp, and the Narkarra Road was washed away by the Kasun River, and in the cup-like pastures of Kashima the cattle waded knee-deep. The clouds dropped down from the Dosehri hills and covered everything.

At the end of the Rains, Boulte's manner towards his wife changed and became demonstratively affectionate. They had been married twelve years, and the change startled Mrs. Boulte, who hated her husband with the hate of a woman who has met with nothing but kindness from her mate, and, in the teeth of this kindness, has done him a great wrong. Moreover, she had her own trouble to fight with — her watch to keep over her own property, Kurrell. For two months the Rains had hidden the Dosehri hills and many other things besides; but, when they lifted, they showed Mrs. Boulte that her man among men, her Ted — for she called him Ted in the old days when Boulte was out of earshot — was slipping the links of the allegiance.

"The Vansuythen Woman has taken him," Mrs. Boulte said to herself; and when Boulte was away, wept over her belief, in the face of the over-vehement blandishments of Ted. Sorrow in Kashima is as fortunate as Love, because there is nothing to weaken it save the flight of Time. Mrs. Boulte had never breathed her suspicion to Kurrell because she was not certain; and her nature led her to be very certain before she took steps in any direction. That is why she behaved as she did.

Boulte came into the house one evening, and leaned against the door-posts of the drawing-room,

chewing his moustache. Mrs. Boulte was putting some flowers into a vase. There is a pretense of civilisation even in Kashima.

"Little woman," said Boulte quietly, "do you care for me?"

"Immensely," said she, with a laugh. "Can you ask it?"

"But I'm serious," said Boulte. "*Do* you care for me?"

Mrs. Boulte dropped the flowers, and turned round quickly. "Do you want an honest answer?"

"Ye-es, I've asked for it."

Mrs. Boulte spoke in a low, even voice for five minutes, very distinctly, that there might be no misunderstanding her meaning. When Samson broke the pillars of Gaza, he did a little thing, and one not to be compared to the deliberate pulling down of a woman's homestead about her own ears. There was no wise female friend to advise Mrs. Boulte, the singularly cautious wife, to hold her hand. She struck at Boulte's heart, because her own was sick with suspicion of Kurrell, and worn out with the long strain of watching alone through the Rains. There was no plan or purpose in her speaking. The sentences made themselves; and Boulte listened, leaning against the door-post with his hands in his pockets. When all was over, and Mrs. Boulte began to breathe through her nose

before breaking out into tears, he laughed and stared straight in front of him at the Dosehri hills.

"Is that all?" he said. "Thanks, I only wanted to know, you know."

"What are you going to do?" said the woman, between her sobs.

"Do! Nothing. What should I do? Kill Kurrell or send you Home, or apply for leave to get a divorce? It's two days' dâk into Narkarra." He laughed again and went on: "I'll tell you what *you* can do. You can ask Kurrell to dinner to-morrow — no, on Thursday, that will allow you time to pack — and you can bolt with him. I give you my word I won't follow."

He took up his helmet and went out of the room, and Mrs. Boulte sat till the moonlight streaked the floor, thinking and thinking and thinking. She had done her best upon the spur of the moment to pull the house down; but it would not fall. Moreover, she could not understand her husband, and she was afraid. Then the folly of her useless truthfulness struck her, and she was ashamed to write to Kurrell, saying: "I have gone mad and told everything. My husband says that I am free to elope with you. Get a dâk for Thursday, and we will fly after dinner." There was a cold-bloodedness about that procedure which did not appeal to her. So she sat still in her own house and thought.

At dinner-time Boulte came back from his walk, white and worn and haggard, and the woman was touched at his distress. As the evening wore on, she muttered some expression of sorrow, something approaching to contrition. Boulte came out of a brown study and said, "Oh, *that!* I wasn't thinking about that. By the way, what does Kurrell say to the elopement?"

"I haven't seen him," said Mrs. Boulte. "Good God! is that all?"

But Boulte was not listening, and her sentence ended in a gulp.

The next day brought no comfort to Mrs. Boulte, for Kurrell did not appear, and the new life that she, in the five minutes' madness of the previous evening, had hoped to build out of the ruins of the old, seemed to be no nearer.

Boulte ate his breakfast, advised her to see her Arab pony fed in the verandah, and went out. The morning wore through, and at midday the tension became unendurable. Mrs. Boulte could not cry. She had finished her crying in the night, and now she did not want to be left alone. Perhaps the Vansuythen Woman would talk to her; and, since talking opens the heart, perhaps there might be some comfort to be found in her company. She was the only other woman in the Station.

In Kashima there are no regular calling-hours.

Every one can drop in upon every one else at pleasure. Mrs. Boulte put on a big *terai* hat, and walked across to the Vansuythen's house to borrow last week's "Queen." The two compounds touched, and instead of going up the drive, she crossed through the gap in the cactus-hedge, entering the house from the back. As she passed through the dining-room, she heard, behind the *purdah* that cloaked the drawing-room door, her husband's voice, saying —

"But on my Honour! On my Soul and Honour, I tell you she doesn't care for me. She told me so last night. I would have told you then if Vansuythen hadn't been with you. If it is for *her* sake that you'll have nothing to say to me, you can make your mind easy. It's Kurrell ——"

"What?" said Mrs. Vansuythen, with an hysterical little laugh. "Kurrell! Oh, it can't be! You two must have made some horrible mistake. Perhaps you — you lost your temper, or misunderstood, or something. Things *can't* be as wrong as you say."

Mrs. Vansuythen had shifted her defence to avoid the man's pleading, and was desperately trying to keep him to a side-issue.

"There must be some mistake," she insisted, "and it can be all put right again."

Boulte laughed grimly.

"It can't be Captain Kurrell! He told me that

he had never taken the least—the least interest in your wife, Mr. Boulte. Oh, *do* listen! He said he had not. He swore he had not," said Mrs. Vansuythen.

The *purdah* rustled, and the speech was cut short by the entry of a little, thin woman, with big rings round her eyes. Mrs. Vansuythen stood up with a gasp.

"What was that you said?" asked Mrs. Boulte. "Never mind that man. What did Ted say to you? What did he say to you? What did he say to you?"

Mrs. Vansuythen sat down helplessly on the sofa, overborne by the trouble of her questioner.

"He said—I can't remember exactly what he said—but I understood him to say—that is—But, really, Mrs. Boulte, isn't it rather a strange question?"

"*Will* you tell me what he said?" repeated Mrs. Boulte. Even a tiger will fly before a bear robbed of her whelps, and Mrs. Vansuythen was only an ordinarily good woman. She began in a sort of desperation: "Well, he said that he never cared for you at all, and, of course, there was not the least reason why he should have, and —and—that was all."

"You said he *swore* he had not cared for me. Was that true?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Vansuythen very softly.

Mrs. Boulte wavered for an instant where she stood, and then fell forward fainting.

"What did I tell you?" said Boulte, as though the conversation had been unbroken. "You can see for yourself. She cares for *him*." The light began to break into his dull mind, and he went on—"And he—what was *he* saying to you?"

But Mrs. Vansuythen, with no heart for explanations or impassioned protestations, was kneeling over Mrs. Boulte.

"Oh, you brute!" she cried. "Are *all* men like this? Help me to get her into my room—and her face is cut against the table. Oh, *will* you be quiet, and help me to carry her? I hate you, and I hate Captain Kurrell. Lift her up carefully and now—go! Go away!"

Boulte carried his wife into Mrs. Vansuythen's bedroom, and departed before the storm of that lady's wrath and disgust, impenitent and burning with jealousy. Kurrell had been making love to Mrs. Vansuythen—would do Vansuythen as great a wrong as he had done Boulte, who caught himself considering whether Mrs. Vansuythen would faint if she discovered that the man she loved had forsworn her.

In the middle of these meditations, Kurrell came cantering along the road and pulled up with a cheery, "Good-mornin'. 'Been mashing Mrs. Vansuythen as usual, eh? Bad thing for a

sober, married man, that. What will Mrs. Boulte say?"

Boulte raised his head and said slowly, "Oh, you liar!" Kurrell's face changed. "What's that?" he asked quickly.

"Nothing much," said Boulte. "Has my wife told you that you two are free to go off whenever you please? She has been good enough to explain the situation to me. You've been a true friend to me, Kurrell — old man — haven't you?"

Kurrell groaned, and tried to frame some sort of idiotic sentence about being willing to give "satisfaction." But his interest in the woman was dead, had died out in the Rains, and, mentally, he was abusing her for her amazing indiscretion. It would have been so easy to have broken off the thing gently and by degrees, and now he was saddled with — Boulte's voice recalled him.

"I don't think I should get any satisfaction from killing you, and I'm pretty sure you'd get none from killing me."

Then in a querulous tone, ludicrously disproportioned to his wrongs, Boulte added —

"'Seems rather a pity that you haven't the decency to keep to the woman, now you've got her. You've been a true friend to *her* too, haven't you?"

Kurrell stared long and gravely. The situation was getting beyond him.

"What do you mean?" he said.

Boulte answered, more to himself than to the questioner: "My wife came over to Mrs. Vansuythen's just now; and it seems you'd been telling Mrs. Vansuythen that you'd never cared for Emma. I suppose you lied, as usual. What had Mrs. Vansuythen to do with you, or you with her? Try to speak the truth for once in a way."

Kurrell took the double insult without wincing, and replied by another question: "Go on. What happened?"

"Emma fainted," said Boulte simply. "But, look here, what had you been saying to Mrs. Vansuythen?"

Kurrell laughed. Mrs. Boulte had, with unbridled tongue, made havoc of his plans; and he could at least retaliate by hurting the man in whose eyes he was humiliated and shown dishonourable.

"Said to her? What *does* a man tell a lie like that for? I suppose I said pretty much what you've said, unless I'm a good deal mistaken."

"I spoke the truth," said Boulte, again more to himself than to Kurrell. "Emma told me she hated me. She has no right in me."

"No! I suppose not. You're only her husband, y'know. And what did Mrs. Vansuythen say after you had laid your disengaged heart at her feet?"

Kurrell felt almost virtuous as he put the question.

"I don't think that matters," Boulte replied; "and it doesn't concern you."

"But it does! I tell you it does—" began Kurrell shamelessly.

The sentence was cut by a roar of laughter from Boulte's lips. Kurrell was silent for an instant, and then he, too, laughed—laughed long and loudly, rocking in his saddle. It was an unpleasant sound—the mirthless mirth of these men on the long, white line of the Narkarra Road. There were no strangers in Kashima, or they might have thought that captivity within the Dosehri hills had driven half the European population mad. The laughter ended abruptly, and Kurrell was the first to speak.

"Well, what are you going to do?"

Boulte looked up the road, and at the hills. "Nothing," said he quietly; "what's the use? It's too ghastly for anything. We must let the old life go on. I can only call you a hound and a liar, and I can't go on calling you names for ever. Besides which, I don't feel that I'm much better. We can't get out of this place. What *is* there to do?"

Kurrell looked round the rat-pit of Kashima and made no reply. The injured husband took up the wondrous tale.

"Ride on, and speak to Emma if you want to. God knows *I* don't care what you do."

He walked forward, and left Kurrell gazing blankly after him. Kurrell did not ride on either to see Mrs. Boulte or Mrs. Vansuythen. He sat in his saddle and thought, while his pony grazed by the roadside.

The whir of approaching wheels roused him. Mrs. Vansuythen was driving home Mrs. Boulte, white and wan, with a cut on her forehead.

"Stop, please," said Mrs. Boulte, "I want to speak to Ted."

Mrs. Vansuythen obeyed, but as Mrs. Boulte leaned forward, putting her hand upon the splash-board of the dog-cart, Kurrell spoke.

"I've seen your husband, Mrs. Boulte."

There was no necessity for any further explanation. The man's eyes were fixed, not upon Mrs. Boulte, but her companion. Mrs. Boulte saw the look.

"Speak to him!" she pleaded, turning to the woman at her side. "Oh, speak to him! Tell him what you told me just now. Tell him you hate him. Tell him you hate him!"

She bent forward and wept bitterly, while the *sais*, impassive, went forward to hold the horse. Mrs. Vansuythen turned scarlet and dropped the reins. She wished to be no party to such unholy explanations.

"I've nothing to do with it," she began coldly; but Mrs. Boulte's sobs overcame her, and she ad-

dressed herself to the man. "I don't know what I am to say, Captain Kurrell. I don't know what I can call you. I think you've—you've behaved abominably, and she has cut her forehead terribly against the table."

"It doesn't hurt. It isn't anything," said Mrs. Boulte feebly. "*That* doesn't matter. Tell him what you told me. Say you don't care for him. Oh, Ted, *won't* you believe her?"

"Mrs. Boulte has made me understand that you were—that you were fond of her once upon a time," went on Mrs. Vansuythen.

"Well!" said Kurrell brutally. "It seems to me that Mrs. Boulte had better be fond of her own husband first."

"Stop!" said Mrs. Vansuythen. "Hear me first. I don't care—I don't want to know anything about you and Mrs. Boulte; but I want *you* to know that I hate you, that I think you are a cur, and that I'll never, *never* speak to you again. Oh, I don't care to say what I think of you, you ——man!"

"I want to speak to Ted," moaned Mrs. Boulte, but the dog-cart rattled on, and Kurrell was left on the road, shamed, and boiling with wrath against Mrs. Boulte.

He waited till Mrs. Vansuythen was driving back to her own house, and, she being freed from the embarrassment of Mrs. Boulte's presence,

had; but when you're with me, I can feel certain that you are not with Mrs. Vansuythen, or making Emma miserable."

Kurrell endures anything that Boulte may say to him. Sometimes they are away for three days together, and then the Major insists upon his wife going over to sit with Mrs. Boulte, although Mrs. Vansuythen has repeatedly declared that she prefers her husband's company to any in the world. From the way in which she clings to him, she would certainly seem to be speaking the truth.

But of course, as the Major says, "in a little Station we must all be friendly."

AT THE PIT'S MOUTH

Men say it was a stolen tide—
  The Lord that sent it he knows all,
But in mine ear will aye abide
  The message that the bells let fall,
And awesome bells they were to me,
That in the dark rang, "Enderby."

Jean Ingelow.

Once upon a time there was a Man and his Wife and a Tertium Quid.

All three were unwise, but the Wife was the unwisest. The Man should have looked after his Wife, who should have avoided the Tertium Quid, who, again, should have married a wife of his own, after clean and open flirtations, to which nobody can possibly object, round Jakko or Observatory Hill. When you see a young man with his pony in a white lather, and his hat on the back of his head, flying down-hill at fifteen miles an hour to meet a girl who will be properly surprised to meet him, you naturally approve of that young man, and wish him Staff appointments, and take an interest in his welfare, and, as the proper time comes, give them sugar-tongs or

intrigue to cloak even her most commonplace actions.

After two months of riding, first round Jakko, then Elysium, then Summer Hill, then Observatory Hill, then under Jutogh, and lastly up and down the Cart Road as far as the Tara Devi gap in the dusk, she said to the Tertium Quid, "Frank, people say we are too much together, and people are so horrid."

The Tertium Quid pulled his moustache, and replied that horrid people were unworthy of the consideration of nice people.

"But they have done more than talk — they have written — written to my hubby — I'm sure of it," said the Man's Wife, and she pulled a letter from her husband out of her saddle-pocket and gave it to the Tertium Quid.

It was an honest letter, written by an honest man, then stewing in the Plains on two hundred rupees a month (for he allowed his wife eight hundred and fifty), and in a silk banian and cotton trousers. It said that, perhaps, she had not thought of the unwisdom of allowing her name to be so generally coupled with the Tertium Quid's; that she was too much of a child to understand the dangers of that sort of thing; that he, her husband, was the last man in the world to interfere jealously with her little amusements and interests, but that it would be better were she to

drop the Tertium Quid quietly and for her husband's sake. The letter was sweetened with many pretty little pet names, and it amused the Tertium Quid considerably. He and She laughed over it, so that you, fifty yards away, could see their shoulders shaking while the horses slouched along side by side.

Their conversation was not worth reporting. The upshot of it was that, next day, no one saw the Man's Wife and the Tertium Quid together. They had both gone down to the Cemetery, which, as a rule, is only visited officially by the inhabitants of Simla.

A Simla funeral with the clergyman riding, the mourners riding, and the coffin creaking as it swings between the bearers, is one of the most depressing things on this earth, particularly when the procession passes under the wet, dank dip beneath the Rockcliffe Hotel, where the sun is shut out, and all the hill streams are wailing and weeping together as they go down the valleys.

Occasionally, folk tend the graves, but we in India shift and are transferred so often that, at the end of the second year, the Dead have no friends — only acquaintances who are far too busy amusing themselves up the hill to attend to old partners. The idea of using a Cemetery as a rendezvous is distinctly a feminine one. A man would have said simply, "Let people talk. We'll go

down the Mall." A woman is made differently, especially if she be such a woman as the Man's Wife. She and the Tertium Quid enjoyed each other's society among the graves of men and women whom they had known and danced with aforetime.

They used to take a big horse-blanket and sit on the grass a little to the left of the lower end, where there is a dip in the ground, and where the occupied graves stop short and the ready-made ones are not ready. Each well-regulated Indian Cemetery keeps half a dozen graves permanently open for contingencies and incidental wear and tear. In the Hills these are more usually baby's size, because children who come up weakened and sick from the Plains often succumb to the effects of the Rains in the Hills, or get pneumonia from their *ayahs* taking them through damp pine-woods after the sun has set. In Cantonments, of course, the man's size is more in request; these arrangements varying with the climate and population.

One day when the Man's Wife and the Tertium Quid had just arrived in the Cemetery, they saw some coolies breaking ground. They had marked out a full-size grave, and the Tertium Quid asked them whether any Sahib was sick. They said that they did not know; but it was an order that they should dig a Sahib's grave.

"[illegible]" said the Tertium Quid, "[illegible]."

[illegible]

"[illegible]" said the Tertium Quid. "[illegible]"

"[illegible]" said the Man's Wife.

"I have got a chill down my back—just as if a [illegible] walked over my grave."

"Why do you look at the thing, then?" said the Man's Wife. "[illegible]."

The Tertium Quid stood at the head of the grave and stared without answering for a space. Then he said, dropping a pebble down, "[illegible]—and cold: horrid cold. I don't think I shall come to the Cemetery any more. I don't think grave-digging is cheerful."

The two talked and agreed that the Cemetery was depressing. They also arranged for a ride next day out from the Cemetery through the Mashobra Tunnel up to Fagoo and back, because all the world was going to a garden-party at Viceregal Lodge, and all the people of Mashobra would go too.

Coming up the Cemetery road, the Tertium Quid's horse tried to bolt up-hill, being tired with

standing so long, and managed to strain a back sinew.

"I shall have to take the mare to-morrow," said the Tertium Quid, "and she will stand nothing heavier than a snaffle."

They made their arrangements to meet in the Cemetery, after allowing all the Mashobra people time to pass into Simla. That night it rained heavily, and, next day, when the Tertium Quid came to the trysting-place, he saw that the new grave had a foot of water in it, the ground being a tough and sour clay.

"'Jove! That looks beastly," said the Tertium Quid. "Fancy being boarded up and dropped into that well!"

They then started off to Fagoo, the mare playing with the snaffle and picking her way as though she were shod with satin, and the sun shining divinely. The road below Mashobra to Fagoo is officially styled the Himalayan-Thibet Road; but in spite of its name it is not much more than six feet wide in most places, and the drop into the valley below may be anything between one and two thousand feet.

"Now we're going to Thibet," said the Man's Wife merrily, as the horses drew near to Fagoo. She was riding on the cliff-side.

"Into Thibet," said the Tertium Quid, "ever so far from people who say horrid things, and hubbies

who write stupid letters. With you — to the end of the world!"

A coolie carrying a log of wood came round a corner, and the mare went wide to avoid him — forefeet in and haunches out, as a sensible mare should go.

"To the world's end," said the Man's Wife, and looked unspeakable things over her near shoulder at the Tertium Quid.

He was smiling, but, while she looked, the smile froze stiff as it were on his face, and changed to a nervous grin — the sort of grin men wear when they are not quite easy in their saddles. The mare seemed to be sinking by the stern, and her nostrils cracked while she was trying to realise what was happening. The rain of the night before had rotted the drop-side of the Himalayan-Thibet Road, and it was giving way under her. "What are you doing?" said the Man's Wife. The Tertium Quid gave no answer. He grinned nervously and set his spurs into the mare, who rapped with her forefeet on the road, and the struggle began. The Man's Wife screamed, "Oh, Frank, get off!"

But the Tertium Quid was glued to the saddle —his face blue and white — and he looked into the Man's Wife's eyes. Then the Man's Wife clutched at the mare's head and caught her by the nose instead of the bridle. The brute threw up

SHE. No. You ought to know that I am a miracle of constancy. What are your — arrangements?

HE. *Ours*, Sweetheart, please.

SHE. Ours, be it then. My poor boy, how the prickly heat has marked your forehead! Have you ever tried sulphate of copper in water?

HE. It'll go away in a day or two up here. The arrangements are simple enough. Tonga in the early morning — reach Kalka at twelve — Umballa at seven — down, straight by night train, to Bombay, and then the steamer of the 21st for Rome. That's my idea. The Continent and Sweden — a ten-week honeymoon.

SHE. Ssh! Don't talk of it in that way. It makes me afraid. Guy, how long have we two been insane?

HE. Seven months and fourteen days, I forget the odd hours exactly, but I'll think.

SHE. I only wanted to see if you remembered. Who are those two on the Blessington Road?

HE. Eabrey and the Penner woman. What do they matter to *us?* Tell me everything that you've been doing and saying and thinking.

SHE. Doing little, saying less, and thinking a great deal. I've hardly been out at all.

HE. That was wrong of you. You haven't been moping?

SHE. Not very much. Can you wonder that I'm disinclined for amusement?

HE. Frankly, I do. Where was the difficulty?

SHE. In this only. The more people I know and the more I'm known here, the wider spread will be the news of the crash when it comes. I don't like that.

HE. Nonsense. We shall be out of it.

SHE. You think so?

HE. I'm sure of it, if there is any power in steam or horse-flesh to carry us away. Ha! ha!

SHE. And the *fun* of the situation comes in — where, my Lancelot?

HE. Nowhere, Guinevere. I was only thinking of something.

SHE. They say men have a keener sense of humour than women. Now *I* was thinking of the scandal.

HE. Don't think of anything so ugly. We shall be beyond it.

SHE. It will be there all the same — in the mouths of Simla — telegraphed over India, and talked of at the dinners — and when He goes out they will stare at Him to see how He takes it. And we shall be dead, Guy dear — dead and cast into the outer darkness where there is ——

HE. Love at least. Isn't that enough.

SHE. I have said so.

HE. And you think so still?

SHE. What do *you* think?

HE. What have I *done?* It means equal ruin to me, as the world reckons it — outcasting, the loss of my appointment, the breaking off my life's work. I pay my price.

SHE. And are you so much above the world that you can afford to pay it? Am I?

HE. My Divinity — what else?

SHE. A very ordinary woman, I'm afraid, but, so far, respectable. How d'you do, Mrs. Middleditch? Your husband? I think he's riding down to Annandale with Colonel Statters. Yes, isn't it divine after the rain? — Guy, how long am I to be allowed to bow to Mrs. Middleditch? Till the 17th?

HE. Frowsy Scotchwoman! What is the use of bringing her into the discussion? You were saying?

SHE. Nothing. Have you ever seen a man hanged?

HE. Yes. Once.

SHE. What was it for?

HE. Murder, of course.

SHE. Murder. Is *that* so great a sin after all? I wonder how he felt before the drop fell.

HE. I don't think he felt much. What a gruesome little woman it is this evening! You're shivering. Put on your cape, dear.

SHE. I think I will. Oh! Look at the mist

coming over Sanjaoli; and I thought we should have sunshine on the Ladies' Mile! Let's turn back.

HE. What's the good? There's a cloud on Elysium Hill, and that means it's foggy all down the Mall. We'll go on. It'll blow away before we get to the Convent, perhaps. 'Jove! It *is* chilly.

SHE. You feel it, fresh from below. Put on your ulster. What do you think of my cape?

HE. Never ask a man his opinion of a woman's dress when he is desperately and abjectly in love with the wearer. Let me look. Like everything else of yours, it's perfect. Where did you get it from?

SHE. He gave it me, on Wednesday — our wedding-day, you know.

HE. The Deuce He did! He's growing generous in his old age. D'you like all that frilly, bunchy stuff at the throat? I don't.

SHE. Don't you?

Kind Sir, o' your courtesy,
As you go by the town, Sir,
'Pray you o' your love for me,
Buy me a russet gown, Sir.

HE. I won't say: "Keek into the draw-well, Janet, Janet." Only wait a little, darling, and

you shall be stocked with russet gowns and everything else.

SHE. And when the frocks wear out, you'll get me new ones—and everything else?

HE. Assuredly.

SHE. I wonder!

HE. Look here, Sweetheart, I didn't spend two days and two nights in the train to hear you wonder. I thought we'd settled all that at Shaifazehat.

SHE (*dreamily*). At Shaifazehat? Does the Station go on still? That was ages and *ages* ago. It must be crumbling to pieces. All except the Amirtollah *kutcha* road. I don't believe *that* could crumble till the Day of Judgment.

HE. You think so? What *is* the mood now?

SHE. I can't tell. How cold it is! Let us get on quickly.

HE. 'Better walk a little. Stop your *jhampanis* and get out. What's the matter with you this evening, dear?

SHE. Nothing. You must grow accustomed to my ways. If I'm boring you I can go home. Here's Captain Congleton coming. I daresay he'll be willing to escort me.

HE. Goose! Between *us*, too! *Damn* Captain Congleton!

SHE. Chivalrous Knight! Is it your habit to swear much in talking? It jars a little, and you might swear at me.

HE. My angel! I didn't know what I was saying; and you changed so quickly that I couldn't follow. I'll apologise in dust and ashes.

SHE. There'll be enough of those later on — Good-night, Captain Congleton. Going to the singing-quadrilles already? What dances am I giving you next week? No! You must have written them down wrong. Five and Seven, *I* said. If you've made a mistake, I certainly don't intend to suffer for it. You must alter your programme.

HE. I thought you told me that you had not been going out much this season?

SHE. Quite true, but when I do I dance with Captain Congleton. He dances very nicely.

HE. And sit out with him, I suppose?

SHE. Yes. Have you any objection? Shall I stand under the chandelier in future?

HE. What does he talk to you about?

SHE. What do men talk about when they sit out?

HE. Ugh! Don't! Well, now I'm up, you must dispense with the fascinating Congleton for a while. I don't like him.

SHE (*after a pause*). Do you know what you have said?

HE. 'Can't say that I do exactly. I'm not in the best of tempers.

SHE. So I see,—and feel. My true and faith-

ful lover, where is your "eternal constancy," "unalterable trust," and "reverent devotion"? I remember those phrases; you seem to have forgotten them. I mention a man's name ——

HE. A good deal more than that.

SHE. Well, speak to him about a dance — perhaps the last dance that I shall ever dance in my life before I—before I go away; and you at once distrust and insult me.

HE. I never said a word.

SHE. How much did you imply? Guy, is *this* amount of confidence to be our stock to start the new life on?

HE. No, of course not. I didn't mean that. On my word and honour, I didn't. Let it pass, dear. Please let it pass.

SHE. This once—yes—and a second time, and again and again, all through the years when I shall be unable to resent it. You want too much, my Lancelot, and — you know too much.

HE. How do you mean?

SHE. That is a part of the punishment. There *cannot* be perfect trust between us.

HE. In Heaven's name, why not?

SHE. Hush! The Other Place is quite enough. Ask yourself.

HE. I don't follow.

SHE. You trust me so implicitly that when I look at another man — Never mind. Guy,

have you ever made love to a girl—a *good* girl?

HE. Something of the sort. Centuries ago—in the Dark Ages, before I ever met you, dear.

SHE. Tell me what you said to her.

HE. What does a man say to a girl? I've forgotten.

SHE. *I* remember. He tells her that he trusts her and worships the ground she walks on, and that he'll love and honour and protect her till her dying day; and so she marries in that belief. At least, I speak of one girl who was *not* protected.

HE. Well, and then?

SHE. And then, Guy, and then, that girl needs *ten* times the love and trust and honour—yes, *honour*—that was enough when she was only a mere wife if—if—the other life she chooses to lead is to be made even bearable. Do you understand?

HE. Even bearable! It'll be Paradise.

SHE. Ah! Can you give me all I've asked for—not now, nor a few months later, but when you begin to think of what you might have done if you had kept your own appointment and your caste here—when you begin to look upon me as a drag and a burden? I shall want it most, then, Guy, for there will be no one in the wide world but you.

HE. You're a little over-tired to-night, Sweet-

heart, and you're taking a stage view of the situation. After the necessary business in the Courts, the road is clear to ——

SHE. "The holy state of matrimony!" Ha! ha! ha!

HE. Ssh! Don't laugh in that horrible way!

SHE. I — I c-c-c-can't help it! Isn't it too absurd! Ah! Ha! ha! ha! Guy, stop me quick, or I shall — l-l-laugh till we get to the Church.

HE. For goodness' sake, stop! Don't make an exhibition of yourself. What *is* the matter with you?

SHE. N-nothing. I'm better now.

HE. That's all right. One moment, dear. There's a little wisp of hair got loose from behind your right ear, and it's straggling over your cheek. So!

SHE. Thank'oo. I'm 'fraid my hat's on one side, too.

HE. What do you wear these huge dagger bonnet-skewers for? They're big enough to kill a man with.

SHE. Oh! Don't kill *me*, though. You're sticking it into my head! Let *me* do it. You men are so clumsy.

HE. Have you had many opportunities of comparing us — in this sort of work?

SHE. Guy, what is my name?

HE. Eh! I don't follow.

SHE. Here's my card-case. Can you read?

HE. Yes. Well?

SHE. Well, that answers your question. You know the other man's name. Am I sufficiently humbled, or would you like to ask me if there is any one else?

HE. I see now. My darling, I never meant that for an instant. I was only joking. There! Lucky there's no one on the road. They'd be scandalised.

SHE. They'll be more scandalised before the end.

HE. Do-on't! I don't like you to talk in that way.

SHE. Unreasonable man! Who asked me to face the situation and accept it? — Tell me, do I look like Mrs. Penner? *Do* I look like a naughty woman! *Swear* I don't! Give me your word of honour, my *honourable* friend, that I'm not like Mrs. Buzgago. That's the way she stands, with her hands clasped at the back of her head. D'you like that?

HE. Don't be affected.

SHE. I'm not. I'm Mrs. Buzgago. Listen!

Pendant une anne' toute entière
Le régiment n'a pas r'paru.
Au Ministère de la Guerre
On le r'porta comme perdu.

On se r'nonçait a r'trouver sa trace,
Quand un matin subitement,
On le vit r'paraître sur la place,
L'Colonel toujours en avant.

That's the way she rolls her r's. *Am* I like her?

HE. No, but I object when you go on like an actress and sing stuff of that kind. Where in the world did you pick up the "Chanson du Colonel?" It isn't a drawing-room song. It isn't proper.

SHE. Mrs. Buzgago taught it me. She is both drawing-room and proper, and in another month she'll shut her drawing-room to me, and, thank God, she isn't as improper as I am. Oh, Guy, Guy! I wish I was like some women and had no scrupies about — what is it Keene says? — "Wearing a corpse's hair and being false to the bread they eat."

HE. I am only a man of limited intelligence, and, just now, very bewildered. When you have *quite* finished flashing through all your moods tell me, and I'll try to understand the last one.

SHE. Moods, Guy! I haven't any. I'm sixteen years old and you're just twenty, and you've been waiting for two hours outside the school in the cold. And now I've met you, and now we're walking home together. Does *that* suit you, My Imperial Majesty?

HE. No. We aren't children. Why can't you be rational?

She. He asks me that when I'm going to commit suicide for his sake, and, and — I don't want to be French and rave about my mother, but have I ever told you that I have a mother, and a brother who was my pet before I married? He's married now. Can't you imagine the pleasure that the news of the elopement will give him? Have you any people at Home, Guy, to be pleased with your performances?

He. One or two. One can't make omelets without breaking eggs.

She (*slowly*). I don't see the necessity ——

He. Hah! What do you mean?

She. Shall I speak the truth?

He. Under the circumstances, perhaps it would be as well.

She. Guy, I'm afraid.

He. I thought we'd settled all that. What of?

She. Of you.

He. Oh, damn it all! The old business! This is *too* bad!

She. Of *you*.

He. And what now?

She. What do you think of me?

He. Beside the question altogether. What do you intend to do?

She. I daren't risk it. I'm afraid. If I could only cheat ——

He. *À la Buzgago?* No, *thanks*. That's the

one point on which I have any notion of Honour. I won't eat his salt and steal too. I'll loot openly or not at all.

SHE. I never meant anything else.

HE. Then, why in the world do you pretend not to be willing to come?

SHE. It's *not* pretence, Guy. I *am* afraid.

HE. Please explain.

SHE. It can't last, Guy. It can't last. You'll get angry, and then you'll swear, and then you'll get jealous, and then you'll mistrust me — you do *now* — and you yourself will be the best reason for doubting. And I — what shall *I* do? I shall be no better than Mrs. Buzgago found out — no better than any one. And you'll *know* that. Oh, Guy, can't you *see?*

HE. I see that you are desperately unreasonable, little woman.

SHE. There! The moment I begin to object, you get angry. What will you do when I am only your property — stolen property? It can't be, Guy. It can't be! I thought it could, but it *can't*. You'll get tired of me.

HE. I tell you I shall *not*. Won't anything make you understand that?

SHE. There, can't you see? If you speak to me like that now, you'll call me horrible names later, if I don't do everything as you like. And if you were cruel to me, Guy, where should I go

—where should I go? I can't trust you. Oh! I *can't* trust you!

HE. I suppose I ought to say that I *can* trust you. I've ample reason.

SHE. *Please* don't, dear. It hurts as much as if you hit me.

HE. It isn't exactly pleasant for *me*.

SHE. I can't help it. I wish I were dead! I can't trust you, and I don't trust myself. Oh, Guy, let it die away and be forgotten!

HE. Too late now. I don't understand you—I won't—and I can't trust myself to talk this evening. May I call to-morrow?

SHE. Yes. *No!* Oh, give me time! The day after. I get into my 'rickshaw here and meet Him at Peliti's. You ride.

HE. I'll go on to Peliti's too. I think I want a drink. My world's knocked about my ears and the stars are falling. Who are those brutes howling in the Old Library?

SHE. They're rehearsing the singing-quadrilles for the Fancy Ball. Can't you hear Mrs. Buzgago's voice? She has a solo. It's quite a new idea. Listen.

MRS. BUZGAGO (*in the Old Library*,).

See saw! Margery Daw!
Sold her bed to lie upon straw.
Wasn't she a silly slut
To sell her bed and lie upon dirt?

POOR DEAR MAMMA

The wild hawk to the wind-swept sky,
The deer to the wholesome wold,
And the heart of a man to the heart of a maid,
As it was in the days of old.

Gypsy Song.

SCENE—*Interior of* MISS MINNIE THREEGAN'S *bed-room at Simla.* MISS THREEGAN, *in window-seat, turning over a drawerful of things.* MISS EMMA DEERCOURT, *besom-friend, who has come to spend the day, sitting on the bed, manipulating the bodice of a ball-room frock and a bunch of artificial lilies of the valley. Time,* 5.30 P. M. *on a hot May afternoon.*

MISS DEERCOURT. And *he* said: "I shall *never* forget this dance," and, of course, I said: "Oh! how *can* you be so silly!" Do you think he meant anything, dear?

MISS THREEGAN. (*Extracting long lavender silk stocking from the rubbish.*) You know him better than *I* do.

MISS D. Oh, *do* be sympathetic, Minnie! I'm *sure* he does. At least I *would* be sure if he wasn't always riding with that odious Mrs. Hagan.

MISS T. I suppose so. How *does* one manage

to dance through one's heels first? Look at this — isn't it shameful? (*Spreads stocking-heel on open hand for inspection.*)

Miss D. Never mind that! You can't mend it. Help me with this hateful bodice. I've run the string *so*, and I've run the string *so*, and I *can't* make the fullness come right. Where would you put this? (*Waves lilies of the valley.*)

Miss T. As high up on the shoulder as possible.

Miss D. Am I quite tall enough? I know it makes May Olger look lop-sided.

Miss T. Yes, but May hasn't your shoulders. Hers are like a hock-bottle.

Bearer. (*Rapping at door.*) Captain Sahib *aya.*

Miss D. (*Jumping up wildly, and hunting for body, which she has discarded owing to the heat of the day.*) Captain Sahib! What Captain Sahib? Oh, good gracious, and I'm only half dressed! Well, I sha'n't bother.

Miss T. (*Calmly.*) You needn't. It isn't for us. That's Captain Gadsby. He is going for a ride with Mamma. He generally comes five days out of the seven.

Agonised Voice. (*From an inner apartment.*) Minnie, run out and give Captain Gadsby some tea, and tell him I shall be ready in ten minutes; and, O Minnie, come to me an instant, there's a dear girl!

Miss T. Oh, bother! (*Aloud.*) Very well,

Mamma. (*Exit, and reappears, after five minutes, flushed, and rubbing her fingers.*)

Miss D. You look pink. What has happened?

Miss T. (*In a stage whisper.*) A twenty-four-inch waist, and she won't let it out. Where *are* my bangles? (*Rummages on the toilet-table, and dabs at her hair with a brush in the interval.*)

Miss D. Who is this Captain Gadsby? I don't think I've met him.

Miss T. You *must* have. He belongs to the Harrar set. I've danced with him, but I've never talked to him. He's a big yellow man, just like a newly-hatched chicken, with an e-normous moustache. He walks like this (*imitates Cavalry swagger*), and he goes "Ha — Hmmm!" deep down in his throat when he can't think of anything to say. Mamma likes him. I don't.

Miss D. (*Abstractedly.*) Does he wax that moustache?

Miss T. (*Busy with powder-puff.*) Yes, I think so. Why?

Miss D. (*Bending over the bodice and sewing furiously.*) Oh, nothing — only ——

Miss T. (*Sternly.*) Only what? Out with it, Emma.

Miss D. Well, May Olger — she's engaged to Mr. Charteris, you know — said — Promise you won't repeat this?

Miss T. Yes, I promise. What did she say?

MISS D. That — that being kissed (*with a rush*) by a man who *didn't* wax his moustache was — like eating an egg without salt.

MISS T. (*At her full height, with crushing scorn.*) May Olger is a horrid, nasty *Thing*, and you can tell her I said so. I'm glad she doesn't belong to my set — I must go and feed this *man!* Do I look presentable?

MISS D. Yes, perfectly. Be quick and hand him over to your Mother, and then we can talk. *I* shall listen at the door to hear what you say to him.

MISS T. 'Sure I don't care. *I'm* not afraid of Captain Gadsby.

In proof of this swings into drawing-room with a mannish stride followed by two short steps, which produces the effect of a restive horse entering. Misses CAPTAIN GADSBY, *who is sitting in the shadow of the window-curtain, and gazes round helplessly.*

CAPTAIN GADSBY. (*Aside.*) The filly, by Jove! 'Must ha' picked up that action from the sire. (*Aloud, rising.*) Good evening, Miss Threegan.

MISS T. (*Conscious that she is flushing.*) Good evening, Captain Gadsby. Mamma told me to say that she will be ready in a few minutes. Won't you have some tea? (*Aside.*) I hope Mamma will be quick. What *am* I to say to

the creature? (*Aloud and abruptly.*) Milk and sugar?

CAPT. G. No sugar, tha-anks, and very little milk. Ha-Hmmm.

MISS T. (*Aside.*) If he's going to do that, I'm lost. I shall laugh. I *know* I shall!

CAPT. G. (*Pulling at his moustache and watching it sideways down his nose.*) Ha-Hmmm. (*Aside.*) 'Wonder what the little beast can talk about. 'Must make a shot at it.

MISS T. (*Aside.*) Oh, this is agonising. I *must* say something.

BOTH TOGETHER. Have you been ——

CAPT. G. I beg your pardon. You were going to say ——

MISS T. (*Who has been watching the moustache with awed fascination.*) Won't you have some eggs?

CAPT. G. (*Looking bewilderedly at the tea-table.*) Eggs! (*Aside.*) O Hades! She must have a nursery-tea at this hour. S'pose they've wiped her mouth and sent her to me while the Mother is getting on her duds. (*Aloud.*) No, thanks.

MISS T. (*Crimson with confusion.*) Oh! I didn't mean that. I wasn't thinking of mou — eggs for an instant. I mean *salt.* Won't you have some sa — sweets? (*Aside.*) He'll think me a raving lunatic. I wish Mamma would come.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) It *was* a nursery-tea and

she's ashamed of it. By Jove! She doesn't look half bad when she colours up like that. (*Aloud, helping himself from the dish.*) Have you seen those new chocolates at Peliti's?

MISS T. No, I made these myself. What are they like?

CAPT. G. These! *De*-licious. (*Aside.*) And that's a fact.

MISS T. (*Aside.*) Oh, bother! he'll think I'm fishing for compliments. (*Aloud.*) No, Peliti's of course.

CAPT. G. (*Enthusiastically.*) Not to compare with these. How d'you make them? I can't get my *khansamah* to understand the simplest thing beyond mutton and fowl.

MISS T. Yes? I'm not a *khansamah*, you know. Perhaps you frighten him. You should never frighten a servant He loses his head. It's very bad policy.

CAPT. G. He's so awf'ly stupid.

MISS T. (*Folding her hands in her lap.*) You should call him quietly and say: "O *khansamah jee!*"

CAPT. G. (*Getting interested.*) Yes? (*Aside.*) Fancy that little featherweight saying, "O *khansamah jee*" to my bloodthirsty Mir Khan!

MISS T. Then you should explain the dinner, dish by dish.

CAPT. G. But I can't speak the vernacular.

MISS T. (*Patronisingly.*) You should pass the Higher Standard and try.

CAPT. G. I have, but I don't seem to be any the wiser. Are you?

MISS T. I never passed the Higher Standard. But the *khansamah* is very patient with me. He doesn't get angry when I talk about sheep's *topees*, or order *maunds* of grain when I mean *seers*.

CAPT. G. (*Aside, with intense indignation.*) I'd like to see Mir Khan being rude to that girl! Hullo! Steady the Buffs! (*Aloud.*) And do you understand about horses, too?

MISS T. A little — not very much. I can't doctor them, but I know what they ought to eat, and I am in charge of our stable.

CAPT. G. Indeed! You might help me, then. What ought a man to give his *sais* in the Hills? My ruffian says eight rupees, because everything is so dear.

MISS T. Six rupees a month, and one rupee Simla allowance — neither more nor less. And a grass-cut gets six rupees. That's better than buying grass in the bazar.

CAPT. G. (*Admiringly.*) How do you know?

MISS T. I have tried both ways.

CAPT. G. Do you ride much, then? I've never seen you on the Mall.

MISS T. (*Aside.*) I haven't passed him *more* than fifty times. (*Aloud.*) Nearly every day.

CAPT. G. By Jove! I didn't know that. Ha-Hmmm! (*Pulls at his moustache and is silent for forty seconds.*)

MISS T. (*Desperately, and wondering what will happen next.*) It looks beautiful. I shouldn't touch it if I were you. (*Aside.*) It's all Mamma's fault for not coming before. I *will* be rude!

CAPT. G. (*Bronzing under the tan and bringing down his hand very quickly.*) Eh! Wha-at! Oh, yes! Ha! Ha! (*Laughs uneasily.*) (*Aside.*) Well, of *all* the dashed cheek! I never had a woman say that to me yet. She must be a cool hand or else — Ah! that nursery-tea!

VOICE FROM THE UNKNOWN. Tchk! Tchk! Tchk!

CAPT. G. Good gracious! What's that?

MISS T. The dog, I think. (*Aside.*) Emma *has* been listening, and I'll never forgive her!

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) They don't keep dogs here. (*Aloud.*) Didn't sound like a dog, did it?

MISS T. Then it must have been the cat. Let's go into the verandah. What a lovely evening it is!

Steps into verandah and looks out across the hills into the sunset. The Captain follows.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) Superb eyes! I wonder that I never noticed them before! (*Aloud.*) There's

going to be a dance at Viceregal Lodge on Wednesday. Can you spare me one?

Miss T. (*Shortly.*) No! I don't want any of your charity-dances. You only ask me because Mamma told you to. I hop and I bump. You *know* I do!

Capt. G. (*Aside.*) That's true, but little girls shouldn't understand these things. (*Aloud.*) No, on my word, I don't. You dance beautifully.

Miss T. Then why do you always stand out after half a dozen turns? I thought officers in the Army didn't tell fibs.

Capt. G. It wasn't a fib, believe me. I really *do* want the pleasure of a dance with you.

Miss T. (*Wickedly.*) Why? Won't Mamma dance with you any more?

Capt. G. (*More earnestly than the necessity demands.*) I wasn't thinking of your Mother. (*Aside.*) You little vixen!

Miss T. (*Still looking out of the window.*) Eh? Oh, I beg your pardon. I was thinking of something else.

Capt. G. (*Aside.*) Well! I wonder what she'll say next. I've never known a woman treat *me* like this before. I might be — Dash it, I might be an Infantry subaltern! (*Aloud.*) Oh, *please* don't trouble. I'm not worth thinking about. Isn't your Mother ready yet?

Miss T. I should think so; but promise me,

Captain Gadsby, you won't take poor dear Mamma twice round Jakko any more. It tires her so.

CAPT. G. She says that no exercise tires her.

MISS T. Yes, but she suffers afterwards. *You* don't know what rheumatism is, and you oughtn't to keep her out so late, when it gets chill in the evenings.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) Rheumatism! I *thought* she came off her horse rather in a bunch. Whew! One lives and learns. (*Aloud.*) I'm sorry to hear that. She hasn't mentioned it to me.

MISS T. (*Flurried.*) Of course not! Poor dear Mamma never would. And you mustn't say that I told you, either. Promise me that you won't. Oh, Captain Gadsby, *promise* me you won't!

CAPT. G. I am dumb, or I shall be as soon as you've given me that dance, and another — if you can trouble yourself to think about me for a minute.

MISS T. But you won't like it one little bit. You'll be awfully sorry afterwards.

CAPT. G. I shall like it above all things, and I shall only be sorry that I didn't get more. (*Aside.*) Now what in the world am I saying?

MISS T. Very well. You will have only yourself to thank if your toes are trodden on. Shall we say Seven?

CAPT. G. And Eleven. (*Aside.*) She can't be more than eight stone, but, even then, it's

an absurdly small foot. (*Looks at his own riding-boots.*)

Miss T. They're beautifully shiny. I can almost see my face in them.

Capt. G. I was thinking whether I should have to go on crutches for the rest of my life if you trod on my toes.

Miss T. Very likely. Why not change Eleven for a square?

Capt. G. No, *please!* I want them both waltzes. Won't you write them down?

Miss T. *I* don't get so many dances that I shall confuse them. *You* will be the offender.

Capt. G. Wait and see! (*Aside.*) She doesn't dance perfectly, perhaps, but ——

Miss T. Your tea must have got cold by this time. Won't you have another cup?

Capt. G. No, thanks. Don't you think it's pleasanter out in the verandah? (*Aside.*) I never saw hair take that colour in the sunshine before. (*Aloud.*) It's like one of Dicksee's pictures.

Miss T. Yes! It's a wonderful sunset, isn't it? (*Bluntly.*) But what do *you* know about Dicksee's pictures?

Capt. G. I go Home occasionally. And I used to know the Galleries. (*Nervously.*) You mustn't think me only a Philistine with — a moustache.

Miss T. Don't! *Please* don't! I'm *so* sorry for what I said then. I was *horribly* rude. It slipped

out before I thought. Don't you know the temptation to say frightful and shocking things just for the mere sake of saying them? I'm afraid I gave way to it.

CAPT. G. (*Watching the girl as she flushes.*) I *think* I know the feeling. It would be terrible if we all yielded to it, wouldn't it? For instance, I might say ——

POOR DEAR MAMMA. (*Entering habited, batted, and booted.*) Ah, Captain Gadsby! 'Sorry to keep you waiting. 'Hope you haven't been bored. 'My little girl been talking to you?

MISS T. (*Aside.*) I'm not sorry I spoke about the rheumatism. I'm not! I'm NOT! I only wish I'd mentioned the corns too.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) What a shame! I wonder how old she is. It never occurred to me before. (*Aloud.*) We've been discussing "Shakespeare and the musical glasses" in the verandah.

MISS T. (*Aside.*) Nice man! He knows that quotation. He *isn't* a Philistine with a moustache. (*Aloud.*) Good-bye, Captain Gadsby. (*Aside.*) What a huge hand and *what* a squeeze! I don't suppose he meant it, but he has driven the rings into my fingers.

POOR DEAR MAMMA. Has Vermillion come round yet? Oh, yes! Captain Gadsby, don't you think that the saddle is too far forward? (*They pass into the front verandah.*)

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) How the dickens should I know what she prefers? She told me that she doted on horses. (*Aloud.*) I think it is.

MISS T. (*Coming out into front verandah.*) Oh! Bad Buldoo! I must speak to him for this. He has taken up the curb two links, and Vermillion hates that. (*Passes out and to horse's head.*)

CAPT. G. Let me do it!

MISS T. No, Vermillion understands me. Don't you, old man? (*Looses curb-chain skilfully, and pats horse on nose and throttle.*) Poor Vermillion! *Did* they want to cut his chin off? There!

CAPTAIN GADSBY *watches the interlude with undisguised admiration.*

POOR DEAR MAMMA. (*Tartly to* MISS T.) You've forgotten your guest, I think, dear.

MISS T. Good gracious! So I have! Good-bye. (*Retreats indoors hastily.*)

POOR DEAR MAMMA. (*Bunching reins in fingers, hampered by too tight gauntlets.*) Captain Gadsby!

CAPTAIN GADSBY *stoops and makes the foot-rest.*

POOR DEAR MAMMA *blunders, halts too long, and breaks through it.*

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) Can't hold up eleven stone for ever. It's all your rheumatism. (*Aloud.*) Can't imagine why I was so clumsy. (*Aside.*)

Now Little Featherweight would have gone up like a bird.

They ride out of the garden. The Captain falls back.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) How that habit catches her under the arms! Ugh!

POOR DEAR MAMMA. (*With the worn smile of sixteen seasons, the worse for exchange.*) You're dull this afternoon, Captain Gadsby.

CAPT. G. (*Spurring up wearily.*) Why did you keep me waiting so long?

Et cætera, et cætera, et cætera.

(AN INTERVAL OF THREE WEEKS.)

GILDED YOUTH. (*Sitting on railings opposite Town Hall.*) Hullo, Gaddy! 'Been trotting out the Gorgonzola! We all thought it was the Gorgon you're mashing.

CAPT. G. (*With withering emphasis.*) You young cub! What the —— does it matter to you? (*Proceeds to read* GILDED YOUTH *a lecture on discretion and deportment, which crumbles latter like a Chinese Lantern. Departs fuming.*)

POOR DEAR MAMMA

(FURTHER INTERVAL OF FIVE WEEKS.)

SCENE. — *Exterior of New Simla Library on a foggy evening.* MISS THREEGAN *and* MISS DEERCOURT *meet among the 'rickshaws.* MISS T. *is carrying a bundle of books under her left arm.*

MISS D. (*Level intonation.*) Well?

MISS T. (*Ascending intonation.*) Well?

MISS D. (*Capturing her friend's left arm, taking away all the books, placing books in 'rickshaw, returning to arm, securing hand by the third finger, and investigating.*) Well! You *bad* girl! And you *never* told me.

MISS T. (*Demurely.*) He — he — he only spoke yesterday afternoon.

MISS D. Bless you, dear! And I'm to be bridesmaid, aren't I? You *know* you promised *ever* so long ago.

MISS T. Of course. I'll tell you all about it to-morrow. (*Gets into 'rickshaw.*) O Emma!

MISS D. (*With intense interest.*) Yes, dear?

MISS T. (*Piano.*) It's quite true — about — the — egg.

MISS D. What egg?

MISS T. (*Pianissimo prestissimo.*) The egg without the salt. (*Forte.*) *Chalo ghar ko jaldi, jhampani!* (Go home, *jhampani.*)

THE WORLD WITHOUT

Certain people of importance.

SCENE.—*Smoking-room of the Degchi Club. Time,* 10.30 P. M. *of a stuffy night in the Rains. Four men dispersed in picturesque attitudes and easy-chairs. To these enter* BLAYNE *of the Irregular Moguls, in evening dress.*

BLAYNE. Phew! The Judge ought to be hanged in his own store-godown. Hi, *khitmatgar! Poora* whiskey-peg, to take the taste out of my mouth.

CURTISS. (*Royal Artillery.*) That's it, is it? What the deuce made you dine at the Judge's? You know his *bandobust.*

BLAYNE. 'Thought it couldn't be worse than the Club, but I'll swear he buys ullaged liquor and doctors it with gin and ink. (*Looking round the room.*) Is this all of you to-night?

DOONE. (*P. W. D.*) Anthony was called out at dinner. Mingle had a pain in his tummy.

CURTISS. Miggy dies of cholera once a week in the Rains, and gets drunk on chlorodyne in between. 'Good little chap, though. Any one at the Judge's, Blayne?

BLAYNE. [illegible] and [illegible] — [illegible] it.

[illegible] Gad! [illegible] Was [illegible] ? When I [illegible] bage there I [illegible] — [illegible] as a [illegible]. What had Markyn to say for himself?

BLAYNE. Seems that every one is having a [illegible] good time up there in spite of the rain. By Jove, that reminds me! I knew I hadn't come across just for the pleasure of your society. News! Great news! Markyn told me.

DOOSE. Who's dead now?

BLAYNE. No one that I know of; but Gaddy's booked at last!

DROPPING CHORUS. How much? The Devil! Markyn was pulling your leg. Not GADDY!

BLAYNE. (*Humming.*) "Yea, verily, verily, verily! Verily, verily, I say unto thee. Theodore, the gift o' God! Our Phillup! It's been given out up above.

MACKESY. (*Barrister-at-Law.*) Huh! Women will give out anything. What does accused say?

BLAYNE. Markyn told me that he congratulated him warily—one hand held out, t'other ready to guard. Gaddy turned pink and said it was so.

CURTISS. Poor old Gaddy! They all do it. Who's *she?* Let's hear the details.

BLAYNE. She's a girl—daughter of a Colonel Somebody.

DOONE. Simla's stiff with Colonels' daughters. Be more explicit.

BLAYNE. Wait a shake. What *was* her name? Three—something. Three ——

CURTISS. Stars, perhaps. Gaddy knows *that* brand.

BLAYNE. Threegan — Minnie Threegan.

MACKESY. Threegan! Isn't she a little bit of a girl with red hair?

BLAYNE. 'Bout that — from what Markyn said.

MACKESY. Then I've met her. She was at Lucknow last season. 'Owned a permanently juvenile Mamma, and danced damnably. I say, Jervoise, you knew the Threegans, didn't you?

JERVOISE. (*Civilian of twenty-five years' service, waking up from his doze.*) Eh? What's that? Knew who? How? I thought I was at Home, confound you!

MACKESY. The Threegan girl's engaged, so Blayne says.

JERVOISE. (*Slowly.*) Engaged—engaged! Bless my soul! I'm getting an old man! Little Minnie Threegan engaged! It was only the other day I went home with them in the *Surat*—no, the *Massilia* — and she was crawling about on her hands

and knees among the *ayahs*. 'Used to call me the "*Tick Tack Sahib*" because I showed her my watch. And that was in Sixty-Seven — no, Seventy. Good God, how time flies! I'm an old man. I remember when Threegan married Miss Derwent — daughter of old Hooky Derwent — but that was before your time. And so the little baby's engaged to have a little baby of her own! Who's the other fool?

MACKESY. Gadsby of the Pink Hussars.

JERVOISE. 'Never met him. Threegan lived in debt, married in debt, and'll die in debt. 'Must be glad to get the girl off his hands.

BLAYNE. Gaddy has money — lucky devil. Place at Home, too.

DOONE. He comes of first-class stock. 'Can't quite understand his being caught by a Colonel's daughter, and (*looking cautiously round room*) Black Infantry at that! No offence to you, Blayne.

BLAYNE. (*Stiffly.*) Not much, tha-anks.

CURTISS. (*Quoting motto of Irregular Moguls.*) "We are what we are," eh, old man? But Gaddy was such a superior animal as a rule. Why didn't he go Home and pick his wife there?

MACKESY. They are all alike when they come to the turn into the straight. About thirty a man begins to get sick of living alone ——

CURTISS. And of the eternal muttony-chop in the morning.

DOONE. It's dead goat as a rule, but go on, Mackesy.

MACKESY. If a man's once taken that way nothing will hold him. Do you remember Benoit of your service, Doone? They transferred him to Tharanda when his time came, and he married a platelayer's daughter, or something of that kind. She was the only female about the place.

DOONE. Yes, poor brute. That smashed Benoit's chances of promotion altogether. Mrs. Benoit used to ask: "Was you goin' to the dance this evenin'?"

CURTISS. Hang it all! Gaddy hasn't married beneath him. There's no tar-brush in the family, I suppose.

JERVOISE. Tar-brush! Not an anna. You young fellows talk as though the man was doing the girl an honour in marrying her. You're all too conceited — nothing's good enough for you.

BLAYNE. Not even an empty Club, a dam' bad dinner at the Judge's, and a Station as sickly as a hospital. You're quite right. We're a set of Sybarites.

DOONE. Luxurious dogs, wallowing in ——

CURTISS. Prickly heat between the shoulders. I'm covered with it. Let's hope Beora will be cooler.

BLAYNE. Whew! Are *you* ordered into camp, too? I thought the Gunners had a clean sheet.

CURTISS. No, worse luck. Two cases yesterday — one died — and if we have a third, out we go. Is there any shooting at Beora, Doone?

DOONE. The country's under water, except the patch by the Grand Trunk Road. I was there yesterday, looking at a *bund*, and came across four poor devils in their last stage. It's rather bad from here to Kuchara.

CURTISS. Then we're pretty certain to have a heavy go of it. Heigho! I shouldn't mind changing places with Gaddy for a while. 'Sport with Amaryllis in the shade of the Town Hall, and all that. Oh, why doesn't somebody come and marry me, instead of letting me go into cholera-camp?

MACKESY. Ask the Committee.

CURTISS. You ruffian! You'll stand me another peg for that. Blayne, what will you take? Mackesy is fine on moral grounds. Doone, have you any preference?

DOONE. Small glass Kümmel, please. Excellent carminative, these days. Anthony told me so.

MACKESY. (*Signing voucher for four drinks.*) Most unfair punishment. I only thought of Curtiss as Actæon being chivied round the billiard tables by the nymphs of Diana.

BLAYNE. Curtiss would have to import his nymphs by train. Mrs. Cockley's the only woman in the Station. She won't leave Cockley, and he's doing his best to get her to go.

CURTISS. Good, indeed! Here's Mrs. Cockley's health. To the only wife in the Station and a damned brave woman!

OMNES. (*Drinking.*) A damned brave woman!

BLAYNE. I suppose Gaddy will bring his wife here at the end of the hot weather. They are going to be married almost immediately, I believe

CURTISS. Gaddy may thank his luck that the Pink Hussars are all detachment and no headquarters this hot weather, or he'd be torn from the arms of his love as sure as death. Have you ever noticed the thorough-minded way British Cavalry take to cholera? It's because they are so expensive. If the Pinks had stood fast here, they would have been out in camp a month ago. Yes, I should decidedly like to be Gaddy.

MACKESY. He'll go Home after he's married. and send in his papers — see if he doesn't.

BLAYNE. Why shouldn't he? Hasn't he money? Would any one of us be here if we weren't paupers?

DOONE. Poor old pauper! What has become of the six hundred you rooked from our table last month?

BLAYNE. It took unto itself wings. I think an enterprising tradesman got some of it, and a *shroff* gobbled the rest — or else I spent it.

CURTISS. Gaddy never had dealings with a *shroff* in his life.

DOONE. Virtuous Gaddy! If *I* had three thousand a month, paid from England, I don't think I'd deal with a *shroff* either.

MACKESY. (*Yawning.*) Oh, it's a sweet life. I wonder whether matrimony would make it sweeter.

CURTISS. Ask Cockley — with his wife dying by inches!

BLAYNE. Go Home and get a fool of a girl to come out to — what is it Thackeray says? — "the splendid palace of an Indian pro-consul."

DOONE. Which reminds me. My quarters leak like a sieve. I had fever last night from sleeping in a swamp. And the worst of it is, one can't do anything to a roof till the Rains are over.

CURTISS. What's wrong with you? *I've* haven't eighty rotting Tommies to take into a running stream.

DOONE. No: but I'm mixed boils and bad language. I'm a regular Job all over my body. It's sheer poverty of blood, and I don't see any chance of getting richer — either way.

BLAYNE. Can't you take leave?

DOONE. That's the pull you Army men have over us. Ten days are nothing in your sight. *I'm* so important that Government can't find a substitute if I go away. Ye-es, I'd like to be Gaddy, whoever his wife may be.

CURTISS. You've passed the turn of life that Mackesy was speaking of.

DOONE. Indeed I have, but I never yet had the brutality to ask a woman to share my life out here.

BLAYNE. On my soul I believe you're right. I'm thinking of Mrs. Cockley. The woman's an absolute wreck.

DOONE. Exactly. Because she stays down here. The only way to keep her fit would be to send her to the Hills for eight months — and the same with any woman. I fancy I see myself taking a wife on those terms.

MACKESY. With the rupee at one and sixpence. The little Doones would be little Dehra Doones, with a fine Mussoorie *chi-chi* anent to bring Home for the holidays.

CURTISS. And a pair of be-ewtiful *sambhur*-horns for Doone to wear, free of expense, presented by ——

DOONE. Yes, it's an enchanting prospect. By the way, the rupee hasn't done falling yet. The time will come when we shall think ourselves lucky if we only lose half our pay.

CURTISS. Surely a third's loss enough. Who gains by the arrangement? That's what I want to know.

BLAYNE. The Silver Question! I'm going to bed if you begin squabbling. Thank Goodness, here's Anthony — looking like a ghost.

Enter ANTHONY, *Indian Medical Staff, very white and tired.*

ANTHONY. 'Evening, Blayne. It's raining in sheets. *Whiskey peg lao, khitmatgar.* The roads are something ghastly.

CURTISS. How's Mingle?

ANTHONY. Very bad, and more frightened. I handed him over to Fewton. Mingle might just as well have called him in the first place, instead of bothering me.

BLAYNE. He's a nervous little chap. What has he got, this time?

ANTHONY. 'Can't quite say. A very bad tummy and a blue funk so far. He asked me at once if it was cholera, and I told him not to be a fool. That soothed him.

CURTISS. Poor devil! The funk does half the business in a man of that build.

ANTHONY. (*Lighting a cheroot.*) I firmly believe the funk will kill him if he stays down. You know the amount of trouble he's been giving Fewton for the last three weeks. He's doing his very best to frighten himself into the grave.

GENERAL CHORUS. Poor little devil! Why doesn't he get away?

ANTHONY. 'Can't. He has his leave all right, but he's so dipped he can't take it, and I don't

think his name on paper would raise four annas. That's in confidence, though.

MACKESY. All the Station knows it.

ANTHONY. "I suppose I shall have to die here," he said, squirming all across the bed. He's quite made up his mind to Kingdom Come. And I *know* he has nothing more than a wet-weather tummy if he could only keep a hand on himself.

BLAYNE. That's bad. That's *very* bad. Poor little Miggy. Good little chap, too. I say——

ANTHONY. What do you say?

BLAYNE. Well, look here—anyhow. If it's like that—as you say—I say fifty.

CURTISS. I say fifty.

MACKESY. I go twenty better.

DOONE. Bloated Crœsus of the Bar! I say fifty. Jervoise, what do you say? Hi! Wake up!

JERVOISE. Eh? What's that? What's that?

CURTISS. We want a hundred rupees from you. You're a bachelor drawing a gigantic income, and there's a man in a hole.

JERVOISE. What man? Any one dead?

BLAYNE. No, but he'll die if you don't give the hundred. Here! Here's a peg-voucher. You can see what we've signed for, and Anthony's man will come round to-morrow to collect it. So there will be no trouble.

JERVOISE. (*Signing.*) One hundred, E.M.J. There you are. (*Feebly.*) It isn't one of your jokes, is it?

BLAYNE. No, it really *is* wanted. Anthony, you were the biggest poker-winner last week, and you've defrauded the tax-collector too long. Sign!

ANTHONY. Let's see. Three fifties and a seventy — two twenty — three twenty — say four hundred and twenty. That'll give him a month clear at the Hills. Many thanks, you men. I'll send round the *chaprassi* to-morrow.

CURTISS. You must engineer his taking the stuff, and of course you mustn't ——

ANTHONY. *Of* course. It would never do. He'd weep with gratitude over his evening drink.

BLAYNE. That's just what he would do, damn him. Oh! I say, Anthony, you pretend to know everything. Have you heard about Gaddy?

ANTHONY. No. Divorce Court at last?

BLAYNE. Worse. He's engaged!

ANTHONY. How much? He *can't* be!

BLAYNE. He *is*. He's going to be married in a few weeks. Markyn told me at the Judge's this evening. It's *pukka*.

ANTHONY. You don't say so? Holy Moses! There'll be a shine in the tents of Kedar.

CURTISS. 'Regiment cut up rough, think you?

ANTHONY. 'Don't know anything about the Regiment.

MACKESY. It is bigamy, then?

ANTHONY. Maybe. Do you mean to say that

you men have forgotten, or is there more charity in the world than I thought?

DOONE. You don't look pretty when you are trying to keep a secret. You bloat. Explain.

ANTHONY. Mrs. Herriott!

BLAYNE. (*After a long pause, to the room generally.*) It's my notion that we are a set of fools.

MACKESY. Nonsense. *That* business was knocked on the head last season. Why, young Mallard ——

ANTHONY. Mallard was a candlestick, paraded as such. Think awhile. Recollect last season and the talk then. Mallard or no Mallard, did Gaddy ever talk to any other woman?

CURTISS. There's something in that. It *was* slightly noticeable, now you come to mention it. But she's at Naini Tal and he's at Simla.

ANTHONY. *He* had to go to Simla to look after a globe-trotter relative of his — a person with a title. Uncle or aunt.

BLAYNE. And there he got engaged. No law prevents a man growing tired of a woman.

ANTHONY. Except that he mustn't do it till the woman is tired of him. And the Herriott woman was not that.

CURTISS. She may be now. Two months of Naini Tal work wonders.

DOONE. Curious thing how some women carry a Fate with them. There was a Mrs. Deegie in

the Central Provinces whose men invariably fell away and got married. It became a regular proverb with us when I was down there. I remember three men desperately devoted to her, and they all, one after another, took wives.

CURTISS. That's odd. Now I should have thought that Mrs. Deegie's influence would have led them to take other men's wives. It ought to have made them afraid of the judgment of Providence.

ANTHONY. Mrs. Herriott will make Gaddy afraid of something more than the judgment of Providence, I fancy.

BLAYNE. Supposing things are as you say, he'll be a fool to face her. He'll sit tight at Simla.

ANTHONY. 'Shouldn't be a bit surprised if he went off to Naini to explain. He's an unaccountable sort of man, and she's likely to be a more than unaccountable woman.

DOONE. What makes you take her character away so confidently?

ANTHONY. *Primum tempus.* Gaddy was her first, and a woman doesn't allow her first man to drop away without expostulation. She justifies the first transfer of affection to herself by swearing that it is for ever and ever. Consequently ——

BLAYNE. Consequently, we are sitting here till past one o'clock, talking scandal like a set of Station cats. Anthony, it's all your fault. We

were perfectly respectable till you came in. Go to bed. I'm off. Good-night all.

CURTISS. Past one! It's past two, by Jove, and here's the *khit* coming for the late charge. Just Heavens! One, two, three, four, *five* rupees to pay for the pleasure of saying that a poor little beast of a woman is no better than she should be. I'm ashamed of myself. Go to bed, you slanderous villains, and if I'm sent to Beora to-morrow, be prepared to hear I'm dead before paying my card account!

THE TENTS OF KEDAR

Only why should it be with pain at all,
Why must I 'twixt the leaves of coronal
Put any kiss of pardon on thy brow?
Why should the other women know so much,
And talk together: — Such the look and such
The smile he used to love with, then as now.

Any Wife to any Husband.

SCENE.—*A Naini Tal dinner for thirty-four. Plate, wines, crockery, and khitmatgars carefully calculated to scale of Rs. 6000 per mensem, less Exchange. Table split lengthwise by bank of flowers.*

MRS. HERRIOTT. (*After conversation has risen to proper pitch.*) Ah! 'Didn't see you in the crush in the drawing-room. (*Sotto voce.*) Where *have* you been all this while, Pip?

CAPTAIN GADSBY. (*Turning from regularly ordained dinner partner and settling hock glasses.*) Good-evening. (*Sotto voce.*) Not quite so loud another time. You've no notion how your voice carries. (*Aside.*) So much for shirking the written explanation. It'll have to be a verbal one now. Sweet prospect! How on earth am I to tell her that I am a re-

spectable, engaged member of society and it's all over between us?

MRS. H. I've a heavy score against you. Where were you at the Monday Pop? Where were you on Tuesday? Where were you at the Lamonts' tennis? I was looking everywhere.

CAPT. G. For me! Oh, I was alive somewhere, I suppose. (*Aside.*) It's for Minnie's sake, but it's going to be dashed unpleasant.

MRS. H. Have I done anything to offend you? I never meant it if I have. I couldn't help going for a ride with the Vaynor man. It was promised a week before you came up.

CAPT. G. I didn't know ——

MRS. H. It really *was.*

CAPT. G. Anything about it, I mean.

MRS. H. What has upset you to-day? All these days? You haven't been near me for four whole days — nearly one hundred hours. Was it *kind* of you, Pip? And I've been looking forward so much to your coming.

CAPT. G. Have you?

MRS. H. You *know* I have! I've been as foolish as a school-girl about it. I made a little calendar and put it in my card-case, and every time the twelve-o'clock gun went off I scratched out a square and said: "That brings me nearer to Pip. *My* Pip!"

CAPT. G. (*With an uneasy laugh.*) What will Mackler think if you neglect him so?

MRS. H. And it hasn't brought you nearer. You seem farther away than ever. Are you sulking about something? I know your temper.

CAPT. G. No.

MRS. H. Have I grown old in the last few months, then? (*Reaches forward to bank of flowers for menu-card.*)

PARTNER ON LEFT. Allow me. (*Hands menu-card.* MRS. H. *keeps her arm at full stretch for three seconds.*)

MRS. H. (*To partner.*) Oh, thanks. I didn't see. (*Turns right again.*) Is anything in me changed at all?

CAPT. G. For Goodness' sake go on with your dinner! You must eat something. Try one of those cutlet arrangements. (*Aside.*) And I fancied she had good shoulders, once upon a time! What an ass a man can make of himself!

MRS. H. (*Helping herself to a paper frill, seven peas, some stamped carrots, and a spoonful of gravy.*) That isn't an answer. Tell me whether I have done anything.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) If it isn't ended here, there will be a ghastly scene somewhere else. If only I'd written to her and stood the racket — at long range! (*To Khitmatgar.*) *Han! Simpkin do.* (*Aloud.*) I'll tell you later on.

MRS. H. Tell me *now*. It must be some foolish misunderstanding, and you know that there was

CAPT. G. I'll let her think it over for a while. But I ought to be horse-whipped.

MRS. H. I want to know what you meant by what you said just now.

CAPT. G. Exactly what I said. No less.

MRS. H. But what have I done to deserve it? What *have* I done?

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) If she only wouldn't look at me! (*Aloud and very slowly, his eyes on his plate.*) D'you remember that evening in July, before the Rains broke, when you said that the end would have to come sooner or later — and you wondered for which of us it would come first?

MRS. H. Yes! I was only joking. And you swore that, as long as there was breath in your body, it should *never* come. And I believed you.

CAPT. G. (*Fingering menu-card.*) Well, it has. That's all.

A long pause, during which MRS. H. *bows her head and rolls the bread-twist into little pellets:* G. *stares at the oleanders.*

MRS. H. (*Throwing back her head and laughing naturally.*) They train us women well, don't they, Pip?

CAPT. G. (*Brutally, touching shirt-stud.*) So far as the expression goes. (*Aside.*) It isn't in her nature to take things quietly. There'll be an explosion yet.

MRS. H. (*With a shudder.*) Thank you. B-but even Red Indians allow people to wriggle when they're being tortured, I believe. (*Slips fan from girdle and fans slowly: rim of fan level with chin.*)

PARTNER ON LEFT. Very close to-night, isn't it? You find it too much for you?

MRS. H. Oh, no, not in the least. But they really ought to have punkahs, even in your cool Naini Tal, oughtn't they? (*Turns, dropping fan and raising eyebrows.*)

CAPT. G. It's all right. (*Aside.*) Here comes the storm!

MRS. H. (*Her eyes on the tablecloth: fan ready in right hand.*) It was very cleverly managed, Pip, and I congratulate you. You swore — you never contented yourself with merely saying a thing — you *swore* that, as far as lay in your power, you'd make my wretched life pleasant for me. And you've denied me the consolation of breaking down. I should have done it — indeed I should. A woman would hardly have thought of this refinement, my kind, considerate friend. (*Fan-guard as before.*) You have explained things so tenderly and truthfully, too! You haven't spoken or written a word of warning, and you have let me believe in you till the last minute. You haven't condescended to give me your *reason* yet. No! A woman could not have managed it half so well. Are there many *men* like you in the world?

CAPT. G. I'm sure I don't know. (*To Khitmatgar.*) Ohé! *Simpkin do.*

MRS. H. You call yourself a man of the world, don't you? Do men of the world behave like Devils when they do a woman the honour to get tired of her?

CAPT. G. I'm sure I don't know. Don't speak so loud!

MRS. H. Keep us respectable, O Lord, whatever happens! Don't be afraid of my compromising you. You've chosen your ground far too well, and I've been properly brought up. (*Lowering fan.*) Haven't you *any* pity, Pip, except for yourself?

CAPT. G. Wouldn't it be rather impertinent of me to say that I'm sorry for you?

MRS. H. I think you have said it once or twice before. You're growing very careful of my feelings. My God, Pip, I was a good woman once! You *said* I was. You've made me what I am. What are you going to do with me? What are you going to do with me? Won't you *say* that you are sorry? (*Helps herself to iced asparagus.*)

CAPT. G. I am sorry for you, if you want the pity of such a brute as I am. I'm *awf'ly* sorry for you.

MRS. H. Rather tame for a man of the world. Do you think that that admission clears you?

CAPT. G. What can I do? I can only tell you

what I think of myself. You can't think worse than that?

MRS. H. Oh, yes, I can! And now, will you tell me the reason of all this? Remorse? Has Bayard been suddenly conscience-stricken?

CAPT. G. (*Angrily, his eyes still lowered.*) No! The thing has come to an end on my side. That's all. *Mafisch!*

MRS. H. "That's all. *Mafisch!*" As though I were a Cairene Dragoman. You used to make prettier speeches. D'you remember when you said ——?

CAPT. G. For Heaven's sake don't bring that back! Call me anything you like and I'll admit it ——

MRS. H. But you don't care to be reminded of old lies? If I could hope to hurt you one-tenth as much as you have hurt me to-night — No, I wouldn't — I couldn't do it — liar though you are.

CAPT. G. I've spoken the truth.

MRS. H. My *dear* Sir, you flatter yourself. You have lied over the reason. Pip, remember that I know you as you don't know yourself. You have been everything to me, though you are — (*Fan-guard.*) Oh, what a contemptible *Thing* it is! And so you are merely tired of me?

CAPT. G. Since you insist upon my repeating it — Yes.

MRS. H. Lie the first. I wish I knew a coarser word. Lie seems so ineffectual in your case. The fire has just died out and there is no fresh one? Think for a minute, Pip, if you care whether I despise you more than I do. Simply *Mafisch*, is it?

CAPT. G. Yes. (*Aside.*) I think I deserve this.

MRS. H. Lie number two. Before the next glass chokes you, tell me her name.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) I'll make her pay for dragging Minnie into the business! (*Aloud.*) Is it likely?

MRS. H. *Very* likely if you thought that it would flatter your vanity. You'd cry my name on the housetops to make people turn round.

CAPT. G. I wish I had. There would have been an end of this business.

MRS. H. Oh, no, there would not — And so you were going to be virtuous and *blasé*, were you? To come to me and say: "I've done with you. The incident is clo-osed." I ought to be proud of having kept such a man so long.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) It only remains to pray for the end of the dinner. (*Aloud.*) You know what I think of myself.

MRS. H. As it's the only person in the world you ever *do* think of, and as I know your mind thoroughly, I do. You want to get it all over and — Oh, I can't keep you back! And you're

going—think of it, Pip—to throw me over for another woman. And you swore that all other women were— Pip, my Pip! She *can't* care for you as I do. Believe me, she can't! Is it any one that I know?

CAPT. G. Thank Goodness it isn't. (*Aside.*) I expected a cyclone, but not an earthquake.

MRS. H. She *can't!* Is there anything that I wouldn't do for you—or haven't done? And to think that I should take this trouble over you, knowing what you are! Do you despise me for it?

CAPT. G. (*Wiping his mouth to hide a smile.*) *Again?* It's entirely a work of charity on your part.

MRS. H. Ahhh! But I have no right to resent it.—Is she better-looking than I? Who was it said——?

CAPT. G. No—not that!

MRS. H. I'll be more merciful than you were. Don't you know that all women are alike?

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) Then this is the exception that proves the rule.

MRS. H. *All* of them! I'll tell you anything you like. I will, upon my word! They only want the admiration—from anybody—no matter who—anybody! But there is always *one* man that they care for more than any one else in the world, and would sacrifice all the others to. Oh, *do* listen! I've kept the Vaynor man trotting after

me like a poodle, and he believes that he is the only man I am interested in. I'll tell you what he said to me.

CAPT. G. Spare him. (*Aside.*) I wonder what *his* version is.

MRS. H. He's been waiting for me to look at him all through dinner. Shall I do it, and you can see what an idiot he looks?

CAPT. G. "But what imports the nomination of this gentleman?"

MRS. H. Watch! (*Sends a glance to the Vaynor man, who tries vainly to combine a mouthful of ice pudding, a smirk of self-satisfaction, a glare of intense devotion, and the stolidity of a British dining countenance.*)

CAPT. G. (*Critically.*) He doesn't look pretty. Why didn't you wait till the spoon was out of his mouth?

MRS. H. To amuse you. She'll make an exhibition of you as I've made of him; and people will laugh at you. Oh, Pip, can't you *see* that? It's as plain as the noonday sun. You'll be trotted about and told lies, and made a fool of like the others. *I* never made a fool of you, did I?

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) What a clever little woman it is!

MRS. H. Well, what have you to say?

CAPT. G. I feel better.

MRS. H. Yes, I suppose so, after I have come down to your level. I couldn't have done it if I

hadn't cared for you so much. I have spoken the truth.

CAPT. G. It doesn't alter the situation.

MRS. H. (*Passionately.*) Then she *has* said that she cares for you! Don't believe her, Pip. It's a lie — as bad as yours to me!

CAPT. G. Sssteady! I've a notion that a friend of yours is looking at you.

MRS. H. He! I *hate* him. He introduced you to me.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) And some people would like women to assist in making the laws. Introduction to imply condonement. (*Aloud.*) Well, you see, if you can remember so far back as that, I couldn't, in common politeness, refuse the offer.

MRS. H. In common politeness! We have got beyond *that!*

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) Old ground means fresh trouble. (*Aloud.*) On my honour ——

MRS. H. Your *what?* Ha, ha!

CAPT. G. Dishonour, then. She's not what you imagine. I meant to ——

MRS. H. Don't tell me anything about her! She *won't* care for you, and when you come back, after having made an exhibition of yourself, you'll find me occupied with ——

CAPT G. (*Insolently.*) You couldn't while I am alive. (*Aside.*) If that doesn't bring her pride to her rescue, nothing will.

MRS. H. (*Drawing herself up.*) Couldn't do it? *I?* (*Softening.*) You're right. I don't believe I could — though you are what you are — a coward and a liar in grain.

CAPT. G. It doesn't hurt so much after your little lecture — with demonstrations.

MRS. H. One mass of vanity! Will nothing *ever* touch you in this life? There must be a Hereafter if it's only for the benefit of — But you will have it all to yourself.

CAPT. G. (*Under his eyebrows.*) Are you so certain of that?

MRS. H. I shall have had mine in this life; and it will serve me right.

CAPT. G. But the admiration that you insisted on so strongly a moment ago? (*Aside.*) Oh, I *am* a brute!

MRS. H. (*Fiercely.*) Will *that* console me for knowing that you will go to her with the same words, the same arguments, and the — the same pet names you used to me? And if she cares for you, you two will laugh over my story. Won't that be punishment heavy enough even for me — even for me? — And it's all useless. That's another punishment.

CAPT. G. (*Feebly.*) Oh, come! I'm not so low as you think.

MRS. H. Not now, perhaps, but you will be. Oh, Pip, if a woman flatters your vanity, there's

nothing on earth that you would not tell her; and no meanness that you would not do. Have I known you so long without knowing that?

CAPT. G. If you can trust me in nothing else — and I don't see why I should be trusted — you can count upon my holding my tongue.

MRS. H. If you denied everything you've said this evening and declared it was all in fun (*a long pause*), I'd trust you. Not otherwise. All I ask is, don't tell her my name. *Please* don't. A man might forget: a woman never would. (*Looks up table and sees hostess beginning to collect eyes.*) So it's all ended, through no fault of mine — Haven't I behaved beautifully? I've accepted your dismissal, and you managed it as cruelly as you could, and I have made you respect my sex, haven't I? (*Arranging gloves and fan.*) I only pray that she'll know you some day as I know you now. I wouldn't be you then, for I think even your conceit will be hurt. I hope she'll pay you back the humiliation you've brought on me. I hope—No. I don't. I *can't* give you up! I must have something to look forward to or I shall go crazy. When it's all over, come back to me, come back to me, and you'll find that you're my Pip still!

CAPT. G. (*Very clearly.*) 'False move, and you pay for it. It's a girl!

MRS. H. (*Rising.*) Then it *was* true! They said — but I wouldn't insult you by asking. A

girl! *I* was a girl not very long ago. Be good to her, Pip. I daresay she believes in you.

Goes out with an uncertain smile. He watches her through the door, and settles into a chair as the men redistribute themselves.

CAPT. G. Now, if there is any Power who looks after this world, will He kindly tell me what I have done? (*Reaching out for the claret, and half aloud.*) What *have* I done?

WITH ANY AMAZEMENT

And are not afraid with any amazement.—*Marriage Service.*

Scene.— A bachelor's bed-room — toilet-table arranged with unnatural neatness. Captain Gaddby *asleep and snoring heavily. Time,* 10.30 A. M.—*a glorious autumn day at Simla. Enter delicately* Captain Maffles *of* Gaddby's *regiment. Looks at sleeper, and shakes his head murmuring, "Poor Gaddy." Performs violent fantasia with hair-brushes on chair-back.*

Capt. M. Wake up, my sleeping beauty! (*Roars.*)

"Uprouse ye, then, my merry merry men!
It is our opening day!
It is our opening da-ay!"

Gaddy, the little dicky-birds have been billing and cooing for ever so long, and *I'm* here!

Capt. G. (*Sitting up and yawning*). 'Mornin'. This is awf'ly good of you, old fellow. Most awf'ly good of you. 'Don't know what I should do without you. 'Pon my soul, I don't. 'Haven't slept a wink all night.

Capt. M. I didn't get in till half-past eleven. 'Had a look at you then, and you seemed to be sleeping as soundly as a condemned criminal.

CAPT. G. Jack, if you want to make those disgustingly worn-out jokes, you'd better go away. (*With portentous gravity.*) It's the happiest day in my life.

CAPT. M. (*Chuckling grimly.*) Not by a very long chalk, my son. You're going through some of the most refined torture you've ever known. But be calm. *I* am with you. 'Shun! *Dress!*

CAPT. G. Eh! Wha-at?

CAPT. M. *Do* you suppose that you are your own master for the next twelve hours? If you *do*, of course —— (*Makes for the door.*)

CAPT. G. No! For Goodness' sake, old man, don't do that! You'll see me through, won't you? I've been mugging up that beastly drill, and can't remember a line of it.

CAPT. M. (*Overhauling* G.'s *uniform.*) Go and tub. Don't bother me. I'll give you ten minutes to dress in.

Interval, filled by the noise as of one splashing in the bath-room.

CAPT. G. (*Emerging from dressing-room.*) What time is it?

CAPT. M. Nearly eleven.

CAPT. G. Five hours more. O Lord!

CAPT. M. (*Aside.*) 'First sign of funk, that. 'Wonder if it's going to spread. (*Aloud.*) Come along to breakfast.

CAPT. G. I can't eat anything. I don't want any breakfast.

CAPT. M. (*Aside.*) So early! (*Aloud.*) Captain Gadsby, I *order* you to eat breakfast, and a dashed good breakfast, too. None of your bridal airs and graces with me.

Leads G. *downstairs, and stands over him while he eats two chops.*

CAPT. G. (*Who has looked at his watch thrice in the last five minutes.*) What time is it?

CAPT. M. Time to come for a walk. Light up.

CAPT. G. I haven't smoked for ten days, and I won't *now.* (*Takes cheroot which* M. *has cut for him, and blows smoke through his nose luxuriously.*) We aren't going down the Mall, are we?

CAPT. M. (*Aside.*) They're all alike in these stages. (*Aloud.*) No, my Vestal. We're going along the quietest road we can find.

CAPT. G. Any chance of seeing Her?

CAPT. M. Innocent! No! Come along, and, if you want me for the final obsequies, don't cut my eye out with your stick.

CAPT. G. (*Spinning round.*) I say, isn't She the dearest creature that ever walked? What's the time? What comes after "wilt thou take this woman"?

CAPT. M. You go for the ring. R'clect it'll be on the top of my right-hand little finger, and just

be careful how you draw it off, because I shall have the Verger's fees somewhere in my glove.

CAPT. G. (*Walking forward hastily.*) D—— the Verger! Come along! It's past twelve and I haven't seen Her since yesterday evening. (*Spinning round again.*) She's an absolute angel, Jack, and She's a dashed deal too good for me. Look here, does She come up the aisle on my arm, or how?

CAPT. M. If I thought that there was the least chance of your remembering anything for two consecutive minutes, I'd tell you. Stop passaging about like that!

CAPT. G. (*Halting in the middle of the road.*) I say, Jack.

CAPT. M. Keep quiet for another ten minutes if you can, you lunatic; and *walk!*

The two tramp at five miles an hour for fifteen minutes.

CAPT. G. What's the time? How about that cursed wedding-cake and the slippers? They don't throw 'em about in church, do they?

CAPT. M. In-variably. The Padre leads off with his boots.

CAPT. G. Confound your silly soul! Don't make fun of me. I can't stand it, and I won't!

CAPT. M. (*Untroubled.*) So-ooo, old horse!

You'll have to sleep for a couple of hours this afternoon.

CAPT. G. (*Spinning round*) I'm *not* going to be treated like a dashed child. Understand that!

CAPT. M. (*Aside.*) Nerves gone to fiddle-strings. What a day we're having! (*Tenderly putting his hand on* G.'s *shoulder.*) My David, how long have you known this Jonathan? Would I come up here to make a fool of you — after all these years?

CAPT. G. (*Penitently.*) I know, I know, Jack — but I'm as upset as I can be. Don't mind what I say. Just hear me run through the drill and see if I've got it all right:

"To have and to hold for better or worse, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, so help me God. Amen."

CAPT. M. (*Suffocating with suppressed laughter.*) Yes. That's about the gist of it. I'll prompt if you get into a hat.

CAPT. G. (*Earnestly.*) Yes, you'll stick by me, Jack, won't you? I'm awf'ly happy, but I don't mind telling *you* that I'm in a blue funk!

CAPT. M. (*Gravely.*) Are you? I should never have noticed it. You don't *look* like it.

CAPT. G. Don't I? That's all right. (*Spinning round.*) On my soul and honour, Jack, She's the sweetest little angel that ever came down from

the sky. There isn't a woman on earth fit to speak to Her.

CAPT. M. (*Aside.*) And this is old Gaddy! (*Aloud.*) Go on if it relieves you.

CAPT. G. You can laugh! That's all you wild asses of bachelors are fit for.

CAPT. M. (*Drawling.*) You never *would* wait for the troop to come up. You aren't quite married yet, y'know.

CAPT. G. Ugh! That reminds me. I don't believe I shall be able to get into my boots. Let's go home and try 'em on! (*Hurries forward.*)

CAPT. M. 'Wouldn't be in *your* shoes for anything that Asia has to offer.

CAPT. G. (*Spinning round.*) That just shows your hideous blackness of soul — your dense stupidity — your brutal narrow-mindedness. There's only one fault about you. You're the best of good fellows, and I don't know what I should have done without you, but — you aren't married. (*Wags his head gravely.*) Take a wife, Jack.

CAPT. M. (*With a face like a wall.*) Ya-as. Whose for choice?

CAPT. G. If you're going to be a blackguard, I'm going on — What's the time?

CAPT. M. (*Hums.*) —

"An' since 'twas very clear we drank only ginger-beer,
Faith, there must ha' been some stingo in the ginger."

Come back, you maniac. I'm going to take you home, and you're going to lie down.

CAPT. G. What on earth do I want to lie down for?

CAPT. M. Give me a light from your cheroot and see.

CAPT. G. (*Watching cheroot-butt quiver like a tuning-fork.*) Sweet state I'm in!

CAPT. M. You are. I'll get you a peg and you'll go to sleep.

They return and M. *compounds a four-finger peg.*

CAPT. G. Oh, *bus! bus!* It'll make me as drunk as an owl.

CAPT. M. 'Curious thing, 'twon't have the slightest effect on you. Drink it off, chuck yourself down there, and go to bye-bye.

CAPT. G. It's absurd. I sha'n't sleep. I *know* I sha'n't!

Falls into heavy doze at end of seven minutes. CAPT. M. *watches him tenderly.*

CAPT. M. Poor old Gaddy! I've seen a few turned off before, but never one who went to the gallows in this condition. 'Can't tell how it affects 'em, though. It's the thoroughbreds that sweat when they're backed into double-harness.—And that's the man who went through the guns at Amdheran like a devil possessed of devils. (*Leans*

over G.) But this is worse than the guns, old pal — worse than the guns, isn't it? (G. *turns in his sleep, and* M. *touches him clumsily on the forehead.*) Poor, dear old Gaddy! Going like the rest of 'em — going like the rest of 'em — Friend that sticketh closer than a brother — eight years. Dashed bit of a slip of a girl — eight weeks! And — where's your friend? (*Smokes disconsolately till church clock strikes three.*)

CAPT. M. Up with you! Get into your kit.

CAPT. G. Already? Isn't it too soon? Hadn't I better have a shave?

CAPT. M. *No!* You're all right. (*Aside.*) He'd chip his chin to pieces.

CAPT. G. What's the hurry?

CAPT. M. You've got to be there first.

CAPT. G. To be stared at?

CAPT. M. Exactly. You're part of the show. Where's the burnisher? Your spurs are in a shameful state.

CAPT. G. (*Gruffly.*) Jack, I be damned if you shall do that for me.

CAPT. M. (*More gruffly.*) Dry up and get dressed! If I choose to clean your spurs, you're under *my* orders.

CAPT. G. *dresses.* M. *follows suit.*

CAPT. M. (*Critically, walking round.*) M'yes, you'll do. Only don't look so like a criminal.

Ring, gloves, fees — that's all right for me. Let your moustache alone. Now, if the ponies are ready, we'll go.

CAPT. G. (*Nervously.*) It's much too soon. Let's light up! Let's have a peg! Let's ——

CAPT. M. Let's make bally asses of ourselves!

BELLS. (*Without.*) —

"Good — peo — ple — all
To prayers — we call."

CAPT. M. There go the bells! Come on — unless you'd rather not. (*They ride off.*)

BELLS.

"We honour the King
And Brides joy do bring —
Good tidings we tell,
And ring the Dead's knell."

CAPT. G. (*Dismounting at the door of the Church.*) I say, aren't we much too soon? There are no end of people inside. I say, aren't we much too late? Stick by me, Jack! What the devil do I do?

CAPT. M. Strike an attitude at the head of the aisle and wait for Her. (G. *groans as* M. *wheels him into position before three hundred eyes.*)

CAPT. M. (*Imploringly.*) Gaddy, if you love me, for pity's sake, for the Honour of the Regiment, stand up! Chuck yourself into your uniform!

Look like a man! I've got to speak to the Padre a minute. (G. *breaks into a gentle perspiration.*) If you wipe your face I'll *never* be your best man again. Stand *up!* (G. *trembles visibly.*)

CAPT. M. (*Returning.*) She's coming now. Look out when the music starts. There's the organ beginning to clack.

Bride steps out of 'rickshaw at Church door. G. catches a glimpse of her and takes heart.

ORGAN. —

"The Voice that breathed o'er Eden,
That earliest marriage day,
The primal marriage-blessing,
It hath not passed away."

CAPT. M. (*Watching* G.) By Jove! He *is* looking well. 'Didn't think he had it in him.

CAPT. G. How long does this hymn go on for?

CAPT. M. It will be over directly. (*Anxiously.*) Beginning to bleach and gulp? Hold on, Gaddy, and think o' the Regiment.

CAPT. G. (*Measuredly.*) I say, there's a big brown lizard crawling up that wall.

CAPT. M. My Sainted Mother! The last stage of collapse!

Bride comes up to left of altar, lifts her eyes once to G., *who is suddenly smitten mad.*

CAPT. G. (*To himself again and again.*) Little

Featherweight's a woman — a woman! And I thought she was a little girl.

CAPT. M. (*In a whisper.*) From the halt — inward *wheel.*

CAPT. G. *obeys mechanically and the ceremony proceeds.*

PADRE. . . . only unto her as long as ye both shall live?

CAPT. G. (*His throat useless.*) Ha — hmmm!

CAPT. M. Say you will or you won't. There's no second deal here.

Bride gives response with perfect coolness, and is given away by the father.

CAPT. G. (*Thinking to show his learning.*) Jack, give me away now, *quick!*

CAPT. M. You've given yourself away quite enough. Her *right* hand, man! Repeat! Repeat! "Theodore Philip." Have you forgotten your own name?

CAPT. G. *stumbles through Affirmation, which Bride repeats without a tremor.*

CAPT. M. Now the ring! Follow the Padre! Don't pull off my glove! Here it is! Great Cupid, he's found his voice!

G. *repeats Troth in a voice to be heard to the end of the Church and turns on his heel.*

CAPT. M. (*Desperately.*) Rein back! Back to your troop! 'Tisn't half legal yet.

PADRE. . . . joined together let no man put asunder.

CAPT. G. *paralysed with fear jibs after Blessing.*

CAPT. M. (*Quickly.*) On your own front — one length. Take her with you. I don't come. You've nothing to say. (CAPT. G. *jingles up to altar.*)

CAPT. M. (*In a piercing rattle meant to be a whisper.*) Kneel, you stiff-necked ruffian! Kneel!

PADRE. . . . whose daughters are ye so long as ye do well and are not afraid with any amazement.

CAPT. M. Dismiss! Break off! Left wheel!

All troop to vestry. They sign.

CAPT. M. Kiss her, Gaddy.

CAPT. G. (*Rubbing the ink into his glove.*) Eh! Wha — at?

CAPT. M. (*Taking one pace to Bride.*) If you don't, I shall.

CAPT. G. (*Interposing an arm.*) Not this journey!

General kissing, in which CAPT. G. *is pursued by unknown female.*

CAPT. G. (*Faintly to* M.) This is Hades! Can I wipe my face now?

CAPT. M. My responsibility has ended. Better ask *Missis* Gadsby.

CAPT. G. *winces as though shot, and procession is Mendelssohned out of Church to house, where usual tortures take place over the wedding-cake.*

CAPT. M. (*At table.*) Up with you, Gaddy. They expect a speech.

CAPT. G. (*After three minutes' agony.*) Ha—hmmm. (*Thunders of applause.*)

CAPT. M. Doocid good, for a first attempt. Now go and change your kit while Mamma is weeping over "the Missus." (CAPT. G. *disappears.* CAPT. M. *starts up, tearing his hair.*) It's not *half* legal. Where are the shoes? Get an *ayah.*

AYAH. Missie Captain Sahib done gone *band karo* all the *jutis.*

CAPT. M. (*Brandishing scabbarded sword.*) Woman, produce those shoes! Some one lend me a bread-knife. We mustn't crack Gaddy's head more than it is. (*Slices heel off white satin slipper and puts slipper up his sleeve.*) Where is the Bride? (*To the company at large.*) Be tender with that rice. It's a heathen custom. Give me the big bag.

. . . . . .

Bride slips out quietly into 'rickshaw and departs towards the sunset.

CAPT. M. (*In the open.*) Stole away, by Jove! So much the worse for Gaddy! Here he is. Now,

THE GARDEN OF EDEN

And ye shall be as — Gods!

SCENE.— *Thymy grass-plot at back of the Mahasu dâk-bungalow, overlooking little wooded valley. On the left, glimpse of the Dead Forest of Fagoo; on the right, Simla Hills. In background, line of the Snows.* CAPTAIN GADSBY, *now three weeks a husband, is smoking the pipe of peace on a rug in the sunshine. Banjo and tobacco-pouch on rug. Overhead the Fagoo eagles.* MRS. G. *comes out of bungalow.*

MRS. G. My husband!

CAPT. G. (*Lazily, with intense enjoyment.*) Eh, wha-at? Say that again.

MRS. G. I've written to Mamma and told her that we shall be back on the 17th.

CAPT. G. Did you give her my love?

MRS. G. No, I kept all that for myself. (*Sitting down by his side.*) I thought you wouldn't mind.

CAPT. G. (*With mock sternness.*) I object awf'ly. How did you know that it was yours to keep?

MRS. G. I guessed, Phil.

CAPT. G. (*Rapturously.*) *Lit-tle* Featherweight!

MRS. G. I *won't* be called those sporting pet names, bad boy.

CAPT. G. You'll be called anything I choose. Has it ever occurred to you, Madam, that you are my Wife?

MRS. G. It has. I haven't ceased wondering at it yet.

CAPT. G. Nor I. It seems so strange; and yet, somehow, it doesn't. (*Confidently.*) You see, it could have been no one else.

MRS. G. (*Softly.*) No. No one else — for me or for you. It must have been *all* arranged from the beginning, Phil, tell me again what made you care for me.

CAPT. G. How could I help it? You were *you*, you know.

MRS. G. Did you ever want to help it? Speak the truth!

CAPT. G. (*A twinkle in his eye.*) I did, darling, just at the first. But only at the very first. (*Chuckles.*) I called you — stoop low and I'll whisper — "a little beast." Ho! Ho! Ho!

MRS. G. (*Taking him by the moustache and making him sit up.*) "A — little — beast!" Stop laughing over your crime! And yet you had the — the — awful cheek to propose to me!

CAPT. G. I'd changed my mind then. And you weren't a little beast any more.

MRS. G. Thank you, Sir! And when was I ever?

CAPT. G. *Never!* But that first day, when you

gave me tea in that peach-coloured muslin gown thing, you looked — you did indeed, dear — such an absurd little mite. And I didn't know what to say to you.

MRS. G. (*Twisting moustache.*) So you said "little beast." Upon my word, Sir! *I* called *you* a "Crrrreature," but I wish now I had called you something worse.

CAPT. G. (*Very meekly.*) I apologise, but you're hurting me awf'ly. (*Interlude.*) You're welcome to torture me again on those terms.

MRS. G. Oh, *why* did you let me do it?

CAPT. G. (*Looking across valley.*) No reason in particular, but — if it amused you or did you any good — you might — wipe those dear little boots of yours on me.

MRS. G. (*Stretching out her hands.*) Don't! Oh, don't! Philip, my King, *please* don't talk like that. It's how *I* feel. You're so much too good for me. So much too good!

CAPT. G. Me! I'm not fit to put my arm round you. (*Puts it round.*)

MRS. G. Yes, you are. But I — what have I ever done?

CAPT. G. Given me a wee bit of your heart, haven't you, my Queen?

MRS. G. *That's* nothing. Any one would do *that.* They cou — couldn't help it.

CAPT. G. Pussy, you'll make me horribly con-

ceited. Just when I was beginning to feel so humble, too.

MRS. G. Humble! I don't believe it's in your character.

CAPT. G. What do you know of my character, Impertinence?

MRS. G. Ah, but I shall, sha'n't I, Phil? I shall have time, in all the years and years to come, to know everything about you; and there will be no secrets between us.

CAPT. G. Little witch! I believe you know me thoroughly already.

MRS. G. I think I can guess. You're selfish?

CAPT. G. Yes.

MRS. G. Foolish?

CAPT. G. *Very.*

MRS. G. And a dear?

CAPT. G. That is as my lady pleases.

MRS. G. Then your lady *is* pleased. (*A pause.*) D'you know that we're two solemn, serious, grown-up people ——

CAPT. G. (*Tilting her straw hat over her eyes.*) You grown-up! Pooh! You're a baby.

MRS. G. And we're talking nonsense.

CAPT. G. Then let's go on talking nonsense. I rather like it. Pussy, I'll tell you a secret. Promise not to repeat?

MRS. G. Ye—es. Only to you.

CAPT. G. I love you.

MRS. G. Re-ally! For how long?

CAPT. G. For ever and ever.

MRS. G. That's a long time.

CAPT. G. 'Think so? It's the shortest *I* can do with.

MRS. G. You're getting quite clever.

CAPT. G. I'm talking to *you*.

MRS. G. Prettily turned. Hold up your stupid old head and I'll pay you for it!

CAPT. G. (*Affecting supreme contempt.*) Take it yourself if you want it.

MRS. G. I've a great mind to — and I will! (*Takes it and is repaid with interest.*)

CAPT. G. Little Featherweight, it's my opinion that we *are* a couple of idiots.

MRS. G. We're the only two sensible people in the world! Ask the eagle. He's coming by.

CAPT. G. Ah! I daresay he's seen a good many sensible people at Mahasu. They say that those birds live for ever so long.

MRS. G. How long?

CAPT. G. A hundred and twenty years.

MRS. G. A hundred and twenty years! O-oh! And in a hundred and twenty years where will these two sensible people be?

CAPT. G. What *does* it matter so long as we are together now?

MRS. G. (*Looking round the horizon.*) Yes. Only you and I — I and you — in the whole wide, wide

world until the end. (*Sees the line of the Snows.*) How big and quiet the hills look! D'you think they care for us?

CAPT. G. 'Can't say I've consulted 'em particularly. *I* care, and that's enough for me.

MRS. G. (*Drawing nearer to him.*) Yes, now — but afterwards. What's that little black blur on the Snows?

CAPT. G. A snowstorm, forty miles away. You'll see it move, as the wind carries it across the face of that spur, and then it will be all gone.

MRS. G. And then it will be all gone. (*Shivers.*)

CAPT. G. (*Anxiously.*) 'Not chilled, pet, are you? 'Better let me get your cloak.

MRS. G. No. Don't leave me, Phil. Stay here. I believe I am afraid. Oh, why are the hills so *horrid!* Phil, promise me, promise me that you'll *always* love me.

CAPT. G. What's the trouble, darling? I can't promise any more than I have; but I'll promise that again and again if you like.

MRS. G. (*Her head on his shoulder.*) *Say* it, then — say it! N-no — don't. The — the — eagles would laugh. (*Recovering.*) My husband, you've married a little goose.

CAPT. G. (*Very tenderly.*) Have I? I am content whatever she is, so long as she is mine.

MRS. G. (*Quickly.*) Because she is yours or because she is me mineself?

CAPT. G. Because she is both. (*Piteously.*) I'm not clever, dear, and I don't think I can make myself understood properly.

MRS. G. *I* understand. Pip, will you tell me something?

CAPT. G. Anything you like. (*Aside.*) I wonder what's coming now.

MRS. G. (*Haltingly, her eyes lowered.*) You told me once in the old days — centuries and centuries ago — that you had been engaged before. I didn't say anything — *then.*

CAPT. G. (*Innocently.*) Why not?

MRS. G. (*Raising her eyes to his.*) Because — because I was afraid of losing you, my heart. But now — tell about it — *please.*

CAPT. G. There's nothing to tell. I was awf'ly old then — nearly two and twenty — and she was *quite* that.

MRS. G. That means she was older than you. I shouldn't like her to have been younger. Well?

CAPT. G. Well, I fancied myself in love and raved about a bit, and — oh, yes, by Jove! I made up poetry. Ha! Ha!

MRS. G. You never wrote any for *me!* What happened?

CAPT. G. I came out here, and the whole thing went *phut.* She wrote to say that there had been a mistake, and then she married.

MRS. G. Did she care for you much?

CAPT. G. No. At least she didn't show it as far as I remember.

MRS. G. As far as you remember! Do you remember her name? (*Hears it and bows her head.*) Thank you, my husband.

CAPT. G. Who but you had the right? Now, Little Featherweight, have you ever been mixed up in any dark and dismal tragedy?

MRS. G. If you call me Mrs. Gadsby, p'raps I'll tell.

CAPT. G. (*Throwing Parade rasp into his voice.*) Mrs. Gadsby, confess!

MRS. G. Good Heavens, Phil! I never knew that you could speak in that terrible voice.

CAPT. G. You don't know half my accomplishments yet. Wait till we are settled in the Plains, and I'll show you how I bark at my troop. You were going to say, darling?

MRS. G. I — I don't like to, after that voice. (*Tremulously.*) Phil, never you *dare* to speak to me in that tone, whatever I may do.

CAPT. G. My poor little love! Why, you're shaking all over. I *am* so sorry. Of course I never meant to upset you. Don't tell me anything. I'm a brute.

MRS. G. No, you aren't, and I *will* tell — There was a man.

CAPT. G. (*Lightly.*) Was there? Lucky man!

MRS. G. (*In a whisper.*) And I thought I cared for him.

CAPT. G. Still luckier man! Well?

MRS. G. And I thought I cared for him—and I didn't—and then you came—and I cared for you very, *very* much indeed. That's all. (*Face hidden.*) You aren't angry, are you?

CAPT. G. Angry? Not in the least. (*Aside.*) Good Lord, what have I done to deserve this angel?

MRS. G. (*Aside.*) And he never asked for the name! How funny men are! But perhaps it's as well.

CAPT. G. That man will go to heaven because you once thought you cared for him. 'Wonder if you'll ever drag me up there?

MRS. G. (*Firmly.*) 'Sha'n't go if you don't.

CAPT. G. Thanks. I say, Pussy, I don't know much about your religious beliefs. You were brought up to believe in a heaven and all that, weren't you?

MRS. G. Yes. But it was a pincushion heaven, with hymn-books in all the pews.

CAPT. G. (*Wagging his head with intense conviction.*) Never mind. There is a *pukka* heaven.

MRS. G. Where do you bring that message from, my prophet?

CAPT. G. Here! Because we care for each other. So it's all right.

MRS. G. (*As a troop of langurs crash through the branches.*) So it's all right. But Darwin says that we came from *those!*

CAPT. G. (*Placidly.*) Ah! Darwin was never in love with an angel. That settles it. Sstt, you brutes! Monkeys, indeed! You shouldn't read those books.

MRS. G. (*Folding her hands.*) If it pleases my Lord the King to issue proclamation.

CAPT. G. Don't, dear one. There are no orders between us. Only I'd *rather* you didn't. They lead to nothing, and bother people's heads.

MRS. G. Like your first engagement.

CAPT. G. (*With an immense calm.*) That was a necessary evil and led to you. Are *you* nothing?

MRS. G. Not so very much, am I?

CAPT. G. All this world and the next to me.

MRS. G. (*Very softly.*) My boy of boys! Shall I tell *you* something?

CAPT. G. Yes, if it's not dreadful — about other men.

MRS. G. It's about my own bad little self.

CAPT. G. Then it must be good. Go on, dear.

MRS. G. (*Slowly.*) I don't know why I'm telling you, Pip; but if ever you marry again — (*Interlude.*) Take your hand from my mouth or I'll *bite!* In the future, then remember — I don't know quite how to put it!

CAPT. G. (*Snorting indignantly.*) Don't try. "Marry again," indeed!

MRS. G. I must. Listen, my husband. Never, never, *never* tell your wife anything that you do not wish her to remember and think over all her life. Because a woman — yes, I *am* a woman — *can't* forget.

CAPT. G. By Jove, how do *you* know that?

MRS. G. (*Confusedly.*) I don't. I'm only guessing. I am — I was — a silly little girl; but I feel that I know so much, oh, so very much more than you, dearest. To begin with, I'm your wife.

CAPT. G. So I have been led to believe.

MRS. G. And I shall want to know every one of your secrets — to share everything you know with you. (*Stares round desperately.*)

CAPT. G. So you shall, dear, so you shall — but don't look like that.

MRS. G. For your own sake, don't stop me, Phil. I shall never talk to you in this way again. You must *not* tell me! At least, not now. Later on, when I'm an old matron, it won't matter; but if you love me, be very good to me now, for this part of my life I shall *never* forget! Have I made you understand?

CAPT. G. I think so, child. Have I said anything yet that you disapprove of?

MRS. G. Will you be *very* angry? That — that

voice, and what you said about the engagement——

CAPT. G. But you *asked* to be told that, darling.

MRS. G. And *that's* why you shouldn't have told me! You must be the judge, and, oh, Pip, dearly as I love you, I sha'n't be able to help you! I shall hinder you, and you must judge in spite of me!

CAPT. G. (*Meditatively.*) We have a great many things to find out together, God help us both — say so, Pussy — but we shall understand each other better every day; and I think I'm beginning to see now. How in the world did you come to know just the importance of giving me just that lead?

MRS. G. I've told you that I *don't* know. Only somehow it seemed that, in all this new life, I was being guided for your sake as well as my own.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) Then Mafflin was right! They know, and we — we're blind — all of us. (*Lightly.*) 'Getting a little beyond our depth. dear, aren't we? I'll remember, and, if I fail, let me be punished as I deserve.

MRS. G. There shall be no punishment. We'll start into life together from here — you and I — and no one else.

CAPT. G. And no one else. (*A pause.*) Your eyelashes are all wet, Sweet? Was there ever such a quaint little Absurdity?

MRS. G. Was there ever such nonsense talked before?

CAPT. G. (*Knocking the ashes out of his pipe.*) 'Tisn't what we say, it's what we don't say, that helps. And it's all the profoundest philosophy. But no one would understand — even if it were put into a book.

MRS. G. The idea! No — only we ourselves, or people like ourselves — if there are any people like us.

CAPT. G. (*Magisterially.*) All people not like ourselves are blind idiots.

MRS. G. (*Wiping her eyes.*) Do you think, then, that there are any people as happy as we are?

CAPT. G. 'Must be — unless we've appropriated all the happiness in the world.

MRS. G. (*Looking towards Simla.*) Poor dears! Just fancy if we have!

CAPT. G. Then we'll hang on to the whole show, for it's a great deal too jolly to lose — eh, wife o' mine?

MRS. G. O Pip! Pip! How much of you is a solemn, married man and how much a horrid, slangy school-boy?

CAPT. G. When you tell me how much of you was eighteen last birthday and how much is as old as the Sphinx and twice as mysterious, perhaps I'll attend to you. Lend me that banjo. The spirit moveth me to yowl at the sunset.

MRS. G. Mind! It's not tuned. Ah! How that jars!

CAPT. G. (*Turning pegs.*) It's amazingly difficult to keep a banjo to proper pitch.

MRS. G. It's the same with all musical instruments. What shall it be?

CAPT. G. "Vanity," and let the hills hear. (*Sings through the first and half of the second verse. Turning to* MRS. G.) Now, chorus! Sing, Pussy!

BOTH TOGETHER. (*Con brio, to the horror of the monkeys who are settling for the night.*)—

"Vanity, all is Vanity," said Wisdom, scorning me—
I clasped my true Love's tender hand and answered frank and free—ee:—
"If this be Vanity who'd be wise?
If this be Vanity who'd be wise?
If this be Vanity who'd be wi—ise?
(*Crescendo.*) Vanity let it be!"

MRS. G. (*Defiantly to the gray of the evening sky.*) "Vanity let it be!"

ECHO. (*From the Fagoo spur.*) Let it be!

FATIMA

And you may go into every room of the house and see everything that is there, but into the Blue Room you must *not* go.— *The Story of Blue Beard.*

SCENE.— *The* GADSBYS' *bungalow in the Plains. Time,* 11 A. M. *on a Sunday morning.* CAPTAIN GADSBY, *in his shirt-sleeves, is bending over a complete set of Hussar's equipment, from saddle to picketing-rope, which is neatly spread over the floor of his study. He is smoking an unclean Brier, and his forehead is puckered with thought.*

CAPT. G. (*To himself, fingering a headstall.*) Jack's an ass. There's enough brass on this to load a mule — and, if the Americans know anything about anything, it can be cut down to a bit only. 'Don't want the watering-bridle, either. Humbug! — Half a dozen sets of chains and pulleys for one horse! Rot! (*Scratching his head.*) Now, let's consider it all over from the beginning. By Jove, I've forgotten the scale of weights! Ne'er mind. 'Keep the bit only, and eliminate every boss from the crupper to breastplate. No breastplate at all. Simple leather strap across the breast — like the Russians. Hi! Jack never thought of *that!*

MRS. G. (*Entering hastily, her hand bound in a cloth.*) Oh, Pip, I've scalded my hand over that horrid, horrid Tiparee jam!

CAPT. G. (*Absently.*) Eh! Wha-at?

MRS. G. (*With round-eyed reproach.*) I've scalded it *aw*-fully! Aren't you sorry? And I *did* so want that jam to jam properly.

CAPT. G. Poor little woman! Let me kiss the place and make it well. (*Unrolling bandage.*) You small sinner! Where's that scald! I can't see it.

MRS. G. On the top of the little finger. There! — It's a most 'normous big burn!

CAPT. G. (*Kissing little finger.*) Baby! Let Hyder look after the jam. You know I don't care for sweets.

MRS. G. In-deed? — Pip!

CAPT. G. Not of that kind, anyhow. And now run along, Minnie, and leave me to my own base devices. I'm busy.

MRS. G. (*Calmly settling herself in long chair.*) So I see. What a mess you're making! Why have you brought all that smelly leather stuff into the house?

CAPT. G. To play with. Do you mind, dear?

MRS. G. Let *me* play too. I'd like it.

CAPT. G. I'm afraid you wouldn't, Pussy — Don't you think that jam will burn, or whatever it is that jam does when it's not looked after by a clever little housekeeper?

MRS. G. I thought you said Hyder could attend to it. I left him in the verandah, stirring — when I hurt myself so.

CAPT. G. (*His eye returning to the equipment.*) Po-oor little woman! — Three pounds four and seven is three eleven, and that can be cut down to two eight, with just a *lee*-tle care, without weakening anything. Farriery is all rot in incompetent hands. What's the use of a shoe-case when a man's scouting? He can't stick it on with a lick —like a stamp—the shoe! Skittles!

MRS. G. What's skittles? Pah! What *is* this leather cleaned with?

CAPT. G. Cream and champagne and — Look here, dear, do you really want to talk to me about anything important?

MRS. G. No. I've done my accounts, and I thought I'd like to see what you're doing.

CAPT. G. Well, love, now you've seen and — Would you mind? — That is to say — Minnie, I really *am* busy.

MRS. G. You want me to go?

CAPT. G. Yes, dear, for a little while. This tobacco will hang in your dress, and saddlery doesn't interest you.

MRS. G. Everything you do interests me, Pip.

CAPT. G. Yes, I know, I know, dear. I'll tell you all about it some day when I've put a head on this thing. In the meantime ——

MRS. G. I'm to be turned out of the room like a troublesome child?

CAPT. G. No-o. I don't mean that exactly. But, you see, I shall be tramping up and down, shifting these things to and fro, and I shall be in your way. Don't you think so?

MRS. G. Can't I lift them about? Let me try. (*Reaches forward to trooper's saddle.*)

CAPT. G. Good gracious, child, don't touch it. You'll hurt yourself. (*Picking up saddle.*) Little girls aren't expected to handle *numdahs*. Now, where would you like it put? (*Holds saddle above his head.*)

MRS. G. (*A break in her voice.*) Nowhere. Pip, how good you are — and how strong! Oh, what's that ugly red streak inside your arm?

CAPT. G. (*Lowering saddle quickly.*) Nothing. It's a mark of sorts. (*Aside.*) And Jack's coming to tiffin with *his* notions all cut and dried!

MRS. G. I know it's a mark, but I've never seen it before. It runs all up the arm. What is it?

CAPT. G. A cut — if you want to know.

MRS. G. Want to know! Of course I do! I can't have my husband cut to pieces in this way. How did it come? Was it an accident? Tell me, Pip.

CAPT. G. (*Grimly.*) No. 'Twasn't an accident. I got it — from a man — in Afghanistan.

MRS. G. In action? Oh, Pip, and you *never* told me!

CAPT. G. I'd forgotten all about it.

MRS. G. Hold up your arm! What a horrid, ugly scar! Are you sure it doesn't hurt now? How did the man give it you?

CAPT. G. (*Desperately looking at his watch.*) With a knife. I came down — old Van Loo did, that's to say — and fell on my leg, so I couldn't run. And then this man came up and began chopping at me as I sprawled.

MRS. G. Oh, don't, don't! That's enough! — Well, what happened?

CAPT. G. I couldn't get to my holster, and Mafflin came round the corner and stopped the performance.

MRS. G. How? He's such a lazy man. I don't believe he did.

CAPT. G. Don't you? I don't think the man had much doubt about it. Jack cut his head off.

MRS. G. Cut — his — head — off! "With one blow," as they say in the books?

CAPT. G. I'm not sure. I was too interested in myself to know much about it. Anyhow, the head was off, and Jack was punching old Van Loo in the ribs to make him get up. Now you know all about it, dear, and now ——

MRS G. You want me to go, of course. You

never told me about this, though I've been married to you for *ever* so long; and you never *would* have told me if I hadn't found out; and you never *do* tell me anything about yourself, or what you do, or what you take an interest in.

CAPT. G. Darling, I'm always with you, aren't I?

MRS. G. Always in my pocket, you were going to say. I know you are; but you are always *thinking* away from me.

CAPT. G. (*Trying to hide a smile.*) Am I? I wasn't aware of it. I'm awf'ly sorry.

MRS. G. (*Piteously.*) Oh, don't make fun of me! Pip, you know what I mean. When you are reading one of those things about Cavalry, by that idiotic Prince—why doesn't he *be* a Prince instead of a stable-boy?

CAPT. G. Prince Kraft a stable-boy — Oh, my Aunt! Never mind, dear. You were going to say?

MRS. G. It doesn't matter; you don't care for what I say. Only—only you get up and walk about the room, staring in front of you, and then Mafflin comes in to dinner, and after I'm in the drawing-room I can hear you and him talking, and talking, and talking, about things I can't understand, and—oh, I get *so* tired and feel *so* lonely!—I don't want to complain and be a trouble, Pip; but I do—indeed I do!

CAPT. G. My poor darling! I never thought

of that. Why don't you ask some nice people in to dinner?

MRS. G. Nice people! Where am I to find them? Horrid frumps! And if I *did*, I shouldn't be amused. You know I only want *you*.

CAPT. G. And you have me surely, Sweetheart?

MRS. G. I have not! Pip, why don't you take me into your life?

CAPT. G. More than I do? That would be difficult, dear.

MRS. G. Yes, I suppose it would — to you. I'm no help to you — no companion to you; and you like to have it so.

CAPT. G. Aren't you a little unreasonable, Pussy?

MRS. G. (*Stamping her foot.*) I'm the most reasonable woman in the world — when I'm treated properly.

CAPT. G. And since when have I been treating you improperly?

MRS. G. Always — and since the beginning. You *know* you have.

CAPT. G. I don't; but I'm willing to be convinced.

MRS. G. (*Pointing to saddlery.*) There!

CAPT. G. How do you mean?

MRS. G. What does all *that* mean? Why am I not to be told? Is it so precious?

CAPT. G. I forget its exact Government value

just at present. It means that it is a great deal too heavy.

MRS. G. Then why do you touch it?

CAPT. G. To make it lighter. See here, little love, I've one notion and Jack has another, but we are both agreed that all this equipment is about thirty pounds too heavy. The thing is how to cut it down without weakening any part of it, and, at the same time, allowing the trooper to carry everything he wants for his own comfort — socks and shirts and things of that kind.

MRS. G. Why doesn't he pack them in a little trunk?

CAPT. G. (*Kissing her.*) Oh, you darling! Pack them in a little trunk, indeed! Hussars don't carry trunks, and it's a most important thing to make the horse do all the carrying.

MRS. G. But why need *you* bother about it? You're not a trooper.

CAPT. G. No; but I command a few score of him; and equipment is nearly everything in these days.

MRS. G. More than *me?*

CAPT. G. Stupid! Of course not; but it's a matter that I'm tremendously interested in, because if I or Jack, or I and Jack, work out some sort of lighter saddlery and all that, it's possible that we may get it adopted.

MRS. G. How?

of that. Why d
in to dinner?

MRS. G. Nice
them? Horrid fr
be amused. You

CAPT. G. And

MRS. G. I hav
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…cale of weights, and the other one - -
…t I'm trying to work to — will shift
… much that I couldn't be certain, even
…t down.
… I'm *so* sorry. I thought I might help.
…ything else I could be of use in?
…G. (*Looking round the room.*) I can't think
…ng. You're *always* helping me, you know.
G. Am I? How?
. G. You are you, of course, and as long as
near me — I can't explain exactly, but it's
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…way?
…PT. G. That's only when I'm trying to do
…k — grubby work like this.
MRS. G. Mafflin's better, then, isn't he?
CAPT. G. (*Rashly.*) Of course he is. Jack and
have been thinking along the same groove for
…o or three years about this equipment. It's our
…obby, and it may really be useful some day.

CAPT. G. Sanctioned at Home, where they will make a sealed pattern—a pattern that all the saddlers must copy—and so it will be used by all the regiments.

MRS. G. And that interests you?

CAPT. G. It's part of my profession, y'know, and my profession is a good deal to me. Everything in a soldier's equipment is important, and if we can improve that equipment, so much the better for the soldiers and for us.

MRS. G. Who's "us"?

CAPT. G. Jack and I; only Jack's notions are too radical. What's that big sigh for, Minnie?

MRS. G. Oh, nothing—and you've kept all this a secret from me! Why?

CAPT. G. Not a secret, exactly, dear. I didn't say anything about it to you because I didn't think it would amuse you.

MRS. G. And am I only made to be amused?

CAPT. G. No, of course. I merely mean that it couldn't interest you.

MRS. G. It's *your* work, and—and if you'd let me, I'd count all these things up. If they are too heavy, you know by how much they are too heavy, and you must have a list of things made out to your scale of lightness, and——

CAPT. G. I have got both scales somewhere in my head; but it's hard to tell how light you can

make a headstall, for instance, until you've actually had a model made.

MRS. G. But if you read out the list, I could copy it down, and pin it up there just above your table. Wouldn't that do?

CAPT. G. It would be awf'ly nice, dear, but it would be giving you trouble for nothing. I can't work that way. I go by rule of thumb. I know the present scale of weights, and the other one — the one that I'm trying to work to — will shift and vary so much that I couldn't be certain, even if I wrote it down.

MRS. G. I'm *so* sorry. I thought I might help. Is there anything else I could be of use in?

CAPT. G. (*Looking round the room.*) I can't think of anything. You're *always* helping me, you know.

MRS. G. Am I? How?

CAPT. G. You are you, of course, and as long as you're near me — I can't explain exactly, but it's in the air.

MRS. G. And that's why you wanted to send me away?

CAPT. G. That's only when I'm trying to do work — grubby work like this.

MRS. G. Mafflin's better, then, isn't he?

CAPT. G. (*Rashly.*) Of course he is. Jack and I have been thinking along the same groove for two or three years about this equipment. It's our hobby, and it may really be useful some day.

MRS. G. (*After a pause.*) And that's all that you have away from me?

CAPT. G. It isn't very far away from you now. Take care the oil on that bit doesn't come off on your dress.

MRS. G. I wish — I wish so much that I could really help you. I believe I could — if I left the room. But that's not what I mean.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) Give me patience! I wish she would go. (*Aloud.*) I assure you you can't do anything for me, Minnie, and I must really settle down to this. Where's my pouch?

MRS. G. (*Crossing to writing-table.*) Here you are, Bear. What a mess you keep your table in!

CAPT. G. Don't touch it. There's a method in my madness, though you mightn't think of it.

MRS. G. (*At table.*) I want to look — Do you keep accounts, Pip?

CAPT. G. (*Bending over saddlery.*) Of a sort. Are you rummaging among the Troop papers? Be careful.

MRS. G. Why? I sha'n't disturb anything. Good gracious! I had no idea that you had anything to do with so many sick horses.

CAPT. G. 'Wish I hadn't, but they insist on falling sick. Minnie, if I were you I really should not investigate those papers. You may come across something that you won't like.

MRS. G. Why will you always treat me like a

child? I know I'm not displacing the horrid things.

CAPT. G. (*Resignedly.*) Very well, then. Don't blame me if anything happens. Play with the table and let me go on with the saddlery. (*Slipping hand into trousers-pocket.*) Oh, the deuce!

MRS. G. (*Her back to* G.) What's that for?

CAPT. G. Nothing. (*Aside.*) There's not much in it, but I wish I'd torn it up.

MRS. G. (*Turning over contents of table.*) I know you'll hate me for this; but I do want to see what your work is like. (*A pause.*) Pip, what are "farcy-buds"?

CAPT. G. Hah! Would you really like to know? They aren't pretty things.

MRS. G. This "Journal of Veterinary Science" says they are of "absorbing interest." Tell me.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) It may turn her attention.

Gives a long and designedly loathsome account of glanders and farcy.

MRS. G. Oh, that's enough. Don't go on!

CAPT. G. But you wanted to know — Then these things suppurate and matterate and spread ——

MRS. G. Pip, you're making me sick! You're a horrid, disgusting school-boy.

CAPT. G. (*On his knees among the bridles.*) You asked to be told. It's not my fault if you worry me into talking about horrors.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) Good old Jack! (*Aloud.*) Why, dear?

MRS. G. He had put his cup down on the ground then, and he literally stepped into it. Some of the tea spirted over my dress — the gray one. I meant to tell you about it before.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) There are the makings of a strategist about Jack, though his methods are coarse. (*Aloud.*) You'd better get a new dress, then. (*Aside.*) Let us pray that that will turn her.

MRS. G. Oh, it isn't stained in the least. I only thought that I'd tell you. (*Returning to letter.*) *What* an extraordinary person! (*Reads.*) "But need I remind you that you have taken upon yourself a charge of wardship" — what in the world is a charge of wardship? — "which, as you yourself know, may end in Consequences ——"

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) It's safest to let 'em see everything as they come across it; but 'seems to me that there are exceptions to the rule. (*Aloud.*) I told you that there was nothing to be gained from rearranging my table.

MRS. G. (*Absently.*) What *does* the woman mean? She goes on talking about Consequences — "almost inevitable Consequences" with a capital C — for half a page. (*Flushing scarlet.*) Oh, good gracious! How abominable!

CAPT. G. (*Promptly.*) Do you think so?

Doesn't it show a sort of motherly interest in us? (*Aside.*) Thank Heaven, Harry always wrapped her meaning up safely! (*Aloud.*) *Is* it absolutely necessary to go on with the letter, darling?

MRS. G. It's impertinent — it's simply horrid. What *right* has this woman to write in this way to you? She oughtn't to.

CAPT. G. When you write to the Deercourt girl, I notice that you generally fill three or four sheets. Can't you let an old woman babble on paper once in a way? She means well.

MRS. G. I don't care. She shouldn't write, and if she did, you ought to have shown me her letter.

CAPT. G. Can't you understand why I kept it to myself, or must I explain at length — as I explained the farcy-buds?

MRS. G. (*Furiously.*) Pip, I *hate* you! This is as bad as those idiotic saddle-bags on the floor. Never mind whether it would please me or not, you ought to have given it to me to read.

CAPT. G. It comes to the same thing. You took it yourself.

MRS. G. Yes, but if I hadn't taken it, you wouldn't have said a word. I think this Harriet Herriott — it's like a name in a book — is an interfering old Thing.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) So long as you thoroughly understand that she *is* old, I don't much care what you think. (*Aloud.*) Very good, dear. Would

you like to write and tell her so? She's seven thousand miles away.

MRS. G. I don't want to have anything to do with her, but you ought to have told me. (*Turning to last page of letter.*) And she patronises *me*, too. *I've* never seen her! (*Reads.*) "I do not know how the world stands with you; in all human probability I shall never know; but whatever I may have said before, I pray for *her* sake more than for yours that all may be well. I have learnt what misery means, and I dare not wish that any one dear to you should share my knowledge."

CAPT. G. Good God! Can't you leave that letter alone, or, at least, can't you refrain from reading it aloud? I've been through it once. Put it back on the desk. Do you hear me?

MRS. G. (*Irresolutely.*) I sh—sha'n't! (*Looks at* G.'s *eyes.*) Oh, Pip, *please!* I didn't mean to make you angry — 'Deed, I didn't. Pip, I'm so sorry. I know I've wasted your time ——

CAPT. G. (*Grimly.*) You have. Now, will you be good enough to go — if there is nothing more in my room that you are anxious to pry into?

MRS. G. (*Putting out her hands.*) Oh, Pip, don't look at me like that! I've never seen you look like that before, and it hu-urts me! I'm sorry. I oughtn't to have been here at all, and — and — and — (*sobbing*). Oh, be good to me! Be good to me! There's only you — anywhere!

Breaks down in long chair, hiding face in cushions.

CAPT. G. (*Aside.*) She doesn't know how she flicked me on the raw. (*Aloud, bending over chair.*) I didn't mean to be harsh, dear — I didn't really. You can stay here as long as you please, and do what you please. Don't cry like that. You'll make yourself sick. (*Aside.*) What on earth has come over her? (*Aloud.*) Darling, what's the matter with you?

MRS. G. (*Her face still hidden.*) Let me go — let me go to my own room. Only — only say you aren't angry with me.

CAPT. G. Angry with *you*, love! Of course not. I was angry with myself. I'd lost my temper over the saddlery — Don't hide your face, Pussy. I want to kiss it.

Bends lower, MRS. G. *slides right arm round his neck. Several interludes and much sobbing.*

MRS. G. (*In a whisper.*) I didn't mean about the jam when I came in to tell you ——

CAPT. G. Bother the jam and the equipment! (*Interlude.*)

MRS. G. (*Still more faintly.*) My finger wasn't scalded at *all.* I — I wanted to speak to you about — about — something else, and — I didn't know how.

CAPT. G. Speak away, then. (*Looking into her*

eyes.) Eh! Wha—at? Minnie! Here, don't go away! You don't mean?

MRS. G. (*Hysterically, backing to portière and hiding her face in its folds.*) The—the Almost Inevitable Consequences! (*Flits through portière as* G. *attempts to catch her, and bolts herself in her own room.*)

CAPT. G. (*His arms full of portière.*) Oh! (*Sitting down heavily in chair.*) I'm a brute—a pig—a bully, and a blackguard. My poor, poor little darling! "Made to be amused only——?"

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

Knowing Good and Evil.

SCENE.—*The* GADSBYS' *bungalow in the Plains, in June. Punkah-coolies asleep in verandah where* CAPTAIN GADSBY *is walking up and down.* DOCTOR'S *trap in porch.* JUNIOR CHAPLAIN *drifting generally and uneasily through the house. Time,* 3.40 A. M. *Heat* 94° *in verandah.*

DOCTOR. (*Coming into verandah and touching* G. *on the shoulder.*) You had better go in and see her now.

CAPT. G. (*The colour of good cigar-ash.*) Eh, wha-at? Oh, yes, of course. What did you say?

DOCTOR. (*Syllable by syllable.*) Go — in — to — the — room — and — see — her. She wants to speak to you. (*Aside, testily.*) I shall have *him* on my hands next.

JUNIOR CHAPLAIN. (*In half-lighted dining-room.*) Isn't there any ——?

DOCTOR. (*Savagely.*) Hsh, you little fool!

JUNIOR CHAPLAIN. Let me do my work. Gadsby, stop a minute! (*Edges after* G.)

DOCTOR. Wait till she sends for you at least — *at least.* Man alive, he'll kill you if you go in there! What are you bothering him for?

JUNIOR CHAPLAIN. (*Coming into verandah.*) I've given him a stiff brandy-peg. He wants it. You've forgotten him for the last ten hours and — forgotten yourself too.

G. *enters bedroom, which is lit by one night-lamp.* AYAH *on the floor pretending to be asleep.*

VOICE. (*From the bed.*) All down the street — *such* bonfires! *Ayah*, go and put them out! (*Appealingly.*) How can I sleep with an installation of the C. I. E. in my room? No — not C. I. E. Something else. *What* was it?

CAPT. G. (*Trying to control his voice.*) Minnie, I'm here. (*Bending over bed.*) Don't you know me, Minnie? It's me — it's Phil — it's your husband.

VOICE. (*Mechanically.*) It's me — it's Phil — it's your husband.

CAPT. G. She doesn't know me! — It's your own husband, darling.

VOICE. Your own husband, darling.

AYAH. (*With an inspiration.*) Memsahib understanding all *I* saying.

CAPT. G. Make her understand me, then — quick!

AYAH. (*Hand on* MRS. G.'s *forehead.*) Memsahib! Captain Sahib here.

VOICE. *Salaam do.* (*Fretfully.*) I know I'm not fit to be seen.

AYAH. (*Aside to* G.) Say "*marneen*" same as breakfash.

CAPT. G. Good-morning, little woman. How are we to-day?

VOICE. That's Phil. Poor old Phil. (*Viciously.*) Phil, you fool, I can't see you. Come nearer.

CAPT. G. Minnie! Minnie! It's me—you know me?

VOICE. (*Mockingly.*) Of course I do. Who does not know the man who was so cruel to his wife—almost the only one he ever had?

CAPT. G. Yes, dear. Yes—of course, of course. But won't you speak to him? He wants to speak to you so much.

VOICE. They'd never let him in. The Doctor would give *darwaza bund* even if he were in the house. He'll never come. (*Despairingly.*) O Judas! Judas! Judas!

CAPT. G. (*Putting out his arms.*) They have let him in, and he always was in the house. Oh, my love—don't you know me?

VOICE. (*In a half chant.*) "And it came to pass at the eleventh hour that this poor soul repented." It knocked at the gates, but they were shut—tight as a plaster—a great, burning plaster. They had pasted our marriage certificate all across the

CAPT. G. I never asked a favour yet. If there is anybody to listen to me, let her know me—even if I die too!

VOICE. (*Very faintly.*) Pip, Pip dear.

CAPT. G. I'm here, darling.

VOICE. What has happened? They've been bothering me so with medicines and things, and they wouldn't let you come and see me. I was never ill before. Am I ill now?

CAPT. G. You—you aren't quite well.

VOICE. How funny! Have I been ill long?

CAPT. G. Some days; but you'll be all right in a little time.

VOICE. Do you think so, Pip? I don't feel well and—Oh! what *have* they done to my hair?

CAPT. G. I d-d-don't know.

VOICE. They've cut it off. What a shame!

CAPT. G. It must have been to make your head cooler.

VOICE. 'Just like a boy's wig. Don't I look horrid?

CAPT. G. Never looked prettier in your life, dear. (*Aside.*) How am I to ask her to say good-bye?

VOICE. I don't *feel* pretty. I feel very ill. My heart won't work. It's nearly dead inside me, and there's a funny feeling in my eyes. Everything seems the same distance—you and the almirah and the table—inside my eyes or miles away. What does it mean, Pip?

CAPT. G. You're a little feverish, Sweetheart—very feverish! (*Breaking down.*) My love! my love! How can I let you go?

VOICE. I thought so. Why didn't you tell me that at first?

CAPT. G. What?

VOICE. That I am going to — die.

CAPT. G. But you aren't. You sha'n't.

AYAH *to punkah-coolie.* (*Stepping into verandah after a glance at the bed.*) *Punkah chor do!* (Stop pulling the punkah.)

VOICE. It's hard, Pip. So very, *very* hard after one year — just one year. (*Wailing.*) And I'm only twenty. Most girls aren't even married at twenty. Can't they do *anything* to help me? I don't *want* to die.

CAPT. G. Hush, dear. You won't.

VOICE. What's the use of talking? *Help* me! You've never failed me yet. Oh, Phil, help me to keep alive. (*Feverishly.*) I don't believe you wish me to live. You weren't a bit sorry when that horrid baby thing died. I wish I'd killed it!

CAPT. G. (*Drawing his hand across his forehead.*) It's more than a man's meant to bear — it's not right. (*Aloud.*) Minnie, love, I'd die for you if it would help.

VOICE. No more death. There's enough already. Pip, don't *you* die too.

CAPT. G. I wish I dared.

VOICE. It says: "Till Death do us part." Nothing after that — and so it would be no use. It stops at the dying. *Why* does it stop there? Only such a very short life, too. Pip, I'm sorry we married.

CAPT. G. No! Anything but that, Min!

VOICE. Because you'll forget and I'll forget. Oh, Pip, *don't* forget! I always loved you, though I was cross sometimes. If I ever did anything that you didn't like, say you forgive me now.

CAPT. G. You never did, darling. On my soul and honour, you never did. I haven't a thing to forgive you.

VOICE. I sulked for a whole week about those petunias. (*With a laugh.*) What a little wretch I was, and how grieved you were! Forgive me that, Pip.

CAPT. G. There's nothing to forgive. It was my fault. They *were* too near the drive. For God's sake don't talk so, Minnie! There's such a lot to say, and so little time to say it in.

VOICE. Say that you'll always love me — until the end.

CAPT. G. Until the end. (*Carried away.*) It's a lie. It *must* be, because we've loved each other. This isn't the end.

VOICE. (*Relapsing into semi-delirium.*) *My* Church-service has an ivory cross on the back, and *it* says so, so it must be true. "Till Death do us part."

— But that's a lie. (*With a parody of* G.'s *manner.*) A damned lie! (*Recklessly.*) Yes, I can swear as well as Trooper Pip. I can't make my head think, though. That's because they cut off my hair. How *can* one think with one's head all fuzzy? (*Pleadingly.*) Hold me, Pip! Keep me with you always and always. (*Relapsing.*) But if you marry the Thorniss girl when I'm dead, I'll come back and howl under our bedroom window all night. Oh, bother! You'll think I'm a jackal. Pip, what time is it?

CAPT. G. A little before the dawn, dear.

VOICE. I wonder where I shall be this time to-morrow?

CAPT. G. Would you like to see the Padre?

VOICE. Why should I? He'd tell me that I am going to heaven; and that wouldn't be true, because you are here. Do you recollect when he upset the cream-ice all over his trousers at the Gassers' tennis?

CAPT. G. Yes, dear.

VOICE. I often wondered whether he got another pair of trousers; but then his are so shiny all over that you really couldn't tell unless you were told. Let's call him in and ask.

CAPT. G. (*Gravely.*) No. I don't think he'd like that. 'Your head comfy, Sweetheart?

VOICE. (*Faintly with a sigh of contentment.*) Yeth! Gracious, Pip, when *did* you shave last? Your

chin's worse than the barrel of a musical box.— No, don't lift it up. I like it. (*A pause.*) You said you've never cried at all. You're crying all over my cheek.

CAPT. G. I — I — I can't help it, dear.

VOICE. How funny! I couldn't cry now to save my life. (G. *shivers.*) *I* want to sing.

CAPT. G. Won't it tire you? 'Better not, perhaps.

VOICE. Why? I *won't* be bothered about. (*Begins in a hoarse quaver*):—

> "Minnie bakes oaten cake, Minnie brews ale,
> All because her Johnnie's coming home from the sea.

(That's parade, Pip.)

> And she grows red as rose, who was so pale;
> And 'Are you sure the church-clock goes?' says she."

(*Pettishly.*) I knew I couldn't take the last note. How do the bass chords run? (*Puts out her hands and begins playing piano on the sheet.*)

CAPT. G. (*Catching up hands.*) Ahh! Don't do that, Pussy, if you love me.

VOICE. Love you? Of course I do. Who else should it be? (*A pause.*)

VOICE. (*Very clearly.*) Pip, I'm going now. Something's choking me cruelly. (*Indistinctly.*) Into the dark — without you, my heart.— But it's a lie, dear — we mustn't believe it.— For ever and

ever, living or dead. Don't let me go, my husband — hold me tight. — They can't — whatever happens. (*A cough.*) Pip — *my* Pip! Not for always — and — so — soon! (*Voice ceases.*)

Pause of ten minutes. G. *buries his face in the side of the bed while* AYAH, *bends over bed from opposite side and feels* MRS. G.'*s breast and forehead.*

CAPT. G. (*Rising.*) *Doctor Sahib ko salaam do.*

AYAH. (*Still by bedside, with a shriek.*) Ai! Ai! *Tuta — phuta!* My *Memsahib!* Not getting — not have got! — *Pusseena agya!* (The sweat has come.) (*Fiercely to* G.) TUM *jao Doctor Sahib ko jaldi!* (*You* go to the doctor.) *Oh,* my *Memsahib!*

DOCTOR. (*Entering hastily.*) Come away, Gadsby. (*Bends over bed.*) Eh! The Dev — What inspired you to stop the punkah? Get out, man — go away — wait outside! *Go!* Here, *ayah!* (*Over his shoulder to* G.) Mind, I promise nothing.

The dawn breaks as G. *stumbles into the garden.*

CAPT. M. (*Reining up at the gate on his way to parade and very soberly.*) Old man, how goes?

CAPT. G. (*Dazed.*) I don't quite know. Stay a bit. Have a drink or something. Don't run away. You're just getting amusing. Ha! Ha!

CAPT. M. (*Aside.*) What *am* I let in for? Gaddy has aged ten years in the night.

CAPT. G. (*Slowly, fingering charger's headstall.*) Your curb's too loose.

CAPT. M. So it is. Put it straight, will you?

(*Aside.*) I shall be late for parade. Poor Gaddy!

CAPT. G. *links and unlinks curb-chain aimlessly, and finally stands staring towards the verandah. The day brightens.*

DOCTOR. (*Knocked out of professional gravity, tramping across flower-beds and shaking* G.'s *hands.*) It's—it's—it's!—Gadsby, there's a fair chance—a *dashed* fair chance! The flicker, y'know. The sweat, y'know! I *saw* how it would be. The punkah, y'know. Deuced clever woman that *ayah* of yours. Stopped the punkah just at the right time. A *dashed* good chance! No—you don't go in. We'll pull her through yet, I promise on my reputation—under Providence. Send a man with this note to Bingle. Two heads better than one. Specially the *ayah! We'll* pull her round. (*Retreats hastily to house.*)

CAPT. G. (*His head on neck of* M.'s *charger.*) *Jack!* I bub—bub—believe I'm going to make a bub—bub—bloody exhibitiod of byself.

CAPT. M. (*Sniffing openly and feeling in his left cuff.*) I b-b—believe I'b doing it already. Old

bad, what *cad* I say? I'b as pleased as—Cod *dab* you, Gaddy! You're one big idiot and I'b adother. (*Pulling himself together.*) Sit tight! Here comes the Devil-dodger.

JUNIOR CHAPLAIN. (*Who is not in the Doctor's confidence.*) We—we are only men in these things, Gadsby. I know that I can say nothing now to help——

CAPT. M. (*Jealously.*) Then don't say it! Leave him alone. It's not bad enough to croak over. Here, Gaddy, take the *chit* to Bingle and ride hell-for-leather. It'll do you good. I can't go.

JUNIOR CHAPLAIN. Do him good! (*Smiling.*) Give me the *chit* and I'll drive. Let him lie down. Your horse is blocking my cart—*please!*

CAPT. M. (*Slowly, without reining back.*) I beg your pardon—I'll apologise. On paper if you like.

JUNIOR CHAPLAIN. (*Flicking* M.'s *charger.*) That'll do, thanks. Turn in, Gadsby, and I'll bring Bingle back—ahem—"hell-for-leather."

CAPT. M. (*Solus.*) It would have served me right if he'd cut me across the face. He can drive too. I shouldn't care to go that pace in a bamboo cart. What a faith he must have in his Maker—of harness! Come *hup*, you brute! (*Gallops off to parade, blowing his nose, as the sun rises.*)

(INTERVAL OF FIVE WEEKS.)

MRS. G. (*Very white and pinched, in morning wrapper at breakfast-table.*) How big and strange the room looks, and oh how glad I am to see it again! What dust, though! I must talk to the servants. Sugar, Pip? I've almost forgotten. (*Seriously.*) Wasn't I very ill?

CAPT. G. Iller than I liked. (*Tenderly.*) Oh, you bad little Pussy, what a start you gave me!

MRS. G. I'll never do it again.

CAPT. G. You'd better not. And now get those poor pale cheeks pink again, or I shall be angry. Don't try to lift the urn. You'll upset it. Wait. (*Comes round to head of table and lifts urn.*)

MRS. G. (*Quickly.*) *Khitmatgar bowarchi-khana see kettly lao.* (Butler, get a kettle from the cook-house.) (*Drawing down* G.'s *face to her own.*) Pip dear, *I* remember.

CAPT. G. What?

MRS. G. That last terrible night.

CAPT. G. Then just you forget all about it.

MRS. G. (*Softly, her eyes filling.*) Never. It has brought us *very* close together, my husband. There! (*Interlude.*) I'm going to give Junda a *saree.*

CAPT. G. I gave her fifty dibs.

MRS. G. So she told me. It was a 'normous reward. Was I worth it? (*Several interludes.*) Don't! Here's the *khitmatgar.* — Two lumps or one, Sir?

THE SWELLING OF JORDAN

If thou hast run with the footmen and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? And if in the land of peace wherein thou trustedst they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?

SCENE.—*The* GADSBYS' *bungalow in the Plains, on a January morning.* MRS. G. *arguing with bearer in back verandah.*

CAPT. M. *rides up.*

CAPT. M. 'Mornin', Mrs. Gadsby. How's the Infant Phenomenon and the Proud Proprietor?

MRS. G. You'll find them in the front verandah; go through the house. I'm Martha just now.

CAPT. M. Cumbered about with cares of *khitmatgars?* I fly.

Passes into front verandah, where GADSBY *is watching* GADSBY JUNIOR, *aged ten months, crawling about the matting.*

CAPT. M. What's the trouble, Gaddy—spoiling an honest man's Europe morning this way? (*Seeing* G. JUNIOR.) By Jove, that yearling's comin' on amazingly! Any amount of bone below the knee there.

The *Butcha* would be all the better for it. I'm going to chuck. You don't understand.

M. (*Hotly.*) I understand *this*. One hundred and thirty-seven new horses to be licked into shape somehow before Luck comes round again; a hairy-heeled draft who'll give more trouble than the horses; a camp next cold weather for a certainty; ourselves the first on the roster; the Russian shindy ready to come to a head at five minutes' notice, and you, the best of us all, backing out of it all! Think a little, Gaddy. You *won't* do it.

G. Hang it, a man has some duties towards his family, I suppose.

M. I remember a man, though, who told me, the night after Amdheran, when we were picketed under Jagai, and he'd left his sword — by the way, did you ever pay Ranken for that sword? — in an Utmanzai's head — that man told me that he'd stick by me and the Pinks as long as he lived. I don't blame him for not sticking by me — I'm not much of a man — but I *do* blame him for not sticking by the Pink Hussars.

G. (*Uneasily.*) We were little more than boys then. Can't you see, Jack, how things stand? 'Tisn't as if we were serving for our bread. We've all of us, more or less, got the filthy lucre. I'm luckier than some, perhaps. There's no *call* for me to serve on.

M. None in the world for you or for us, except

the Regimental. If you don't choose to answer to *that*, of course ——

G. Don't be too hard on a man. You know that a lot of us only take up the thing for a few years, and then go back to Town and catch on with the rest.

M. Not lots, and they aren't some of *Us*.

G. And then there are one's affairs at Home to be considered — my place and the rents, and all that. I don't suppose my father can last much longer, and that means the title, and so on.

M. 'Fraid you won't be entered in the Stud Book correctly unless you go Home? Take six months, then, and come out in October. If I could slay off a brother or two, I s'pose I should be a Marquis of sorts. Any fool can be that; but it needs *men*, Gaddy — men like you — to lead flanking squadrons properly. Don't you delude yourself into the belief that you're going Home to take your place and prance about among pink-nosed Kabuli dowagers. You aren't built that way. I know better.

G. A man has a right to live his life as happily as he can. *You* aren't married.

M. No — praise be to Providence and the one or two women who have had the good sense to *jawab* me.

G. Then you don't know what it is to go into your own room and see your wife's head on the

CAPT. G. Yes, he's a healthy little scoundrel. Don't you think his hair's growing?

M. Let's have a look. Hi! Hst! Come here, General Luck, and we'll report on you.

MRS. G. (*Within.*) What absurd name will you give him next? Why do you call him that?

M. Isn't he our Inspector-General of Cavalry? Doesn't he come down in his seventeen-two perambulator every morning the Pink Hussars parade? Don't wriggle, Brigadier. Give us your private opinion on the way the third squadron went past. 'Trifle ragged, weren't they?

G. A bigger set of tailors than the new draft I don't wish to see. They've given me more than my fair share — knocking the squadron out of shape. It's sickening!

M. When you're in command, you'll do better, young 'un. Can't you walk yet? Grip my finger and try. (*To* G.) 'Twon't hurt his hocks, will it?

G. Oh, no. Don't let him flop, though, or he'll lick all the blacking off your boots.

MRS. G. (*Within.*) Who's destroying my son's character?

M. And my Godson's. I'm ashamed of you, Gaddy. Punch your father in the eye, Jack! Don't you stand it! Hit him again!

G. (*Sotto voce.*) Put The *Butcha* down and come to the end of the verandah. I'd rather the Wife didn't hear — just now.

M. You look awf'ly serious. Anything wrong?

G. 'Depends on your view entirely. I say, Jack, you won't think more hardly of me than you can help, will you? Come further this way.— The fact of the matter is, that I've made up my mind — at least I'm thinking seriously of — cutting the Service.

M. Hwhatt?

G. Don't shout. I'm going to send in my papers.

M. You! Are you mad?

G. No — only married.

M. Look here! What's the meaning of it all? You never intend to leave *us*. You *can't*. Isn't the best squadron of the best regiment of the best cavalry in all the world good enough for you?

G. (*Jerking his head over his shoulder.*) She doesn't seem to thrive in this God-forsaken country, and there's The *Butcha* to be considered, and all that, you know.

M. Does she say that she doesn't like India?

G. That's the worst of it. She won't for fear of leaving me.

M. What are the Hills made for?

G. Not for *my* wife, at any rate.

M. You know too much, Gaddy, and — I don't like you any the better for it!

G. Never mind that. She wants England, and

M. You never did!

G. Once only. He squelched like a *mussuck*, and the Troop-Sergeant-Major cocked his eye at me. You know old Haffy's eye. I was afraid to do it again.

M. I should think so. That was the best way to rupture old Van Loo's tummy, and make him crumple you up. You *knew* that.

G. I didn't care. It took the edge off him.

M. "Took the edge off him"? Gaddy, you—you—you *mustn't*, you know! Think of the men.

G. That's another thing I am afraid of. D'you s'pose they know?

M. Let's hope not; but they're deadly quick to spot skrim—little things of that kind. See here, old man, send the Wife Home for the hot weather and come to Kashmir with me. We'll start a boat on the Dal or cross the Rhotang—shoot ibex or loaf—which you please. Only *come!* You're a bit off your oats and you're talking nonsense. Look at the Colonel—swag-bellied rascal that he is. He has a wife and no end of a bow-window of his own. Can any one of us ride round him—chalkstones and all? I can't, and I think I can shove a crock along a bit.

G. Some men are different. I haven't the nerve. Lord help me, I haven't the nerve! I've taken up a hole and a half to get my knees well under the wallets. I can't help it. I'm so afraid of any-

thing happening to me. On my soul I ought to be broke in front of the squadron for cowardice.

M. Ugly word, that. I should never have the courage to own up.

G. I meant to lie about my reasons when I began, but—I've got out of the habit of lying to you, old man. Jack, you won't?—But I know you won't.

M. Of course not. (*Half aloud.*) The Pinks are paying dearly for their Pride.

G. Eh! Wha-at?

M. Don't you know? The men have called Mrs. Gadsby the Pride of the Pink Hussars ever since she came to us.

G. 'Tisn't *her* fault. Don't think that. It's all mine.

M. What does she say?

G. I haven't exactly put it before her. She's the best little woman in the world, Jack, and all that—but she wouldn't counsel a man to stick to his calling if it came between him and her. At least, I think——

M. Never mind. Don't tell her what you told me. Go on the Peerage and Landed-Gentry tack.

G. She'd see through it. She's five times cleverer than I am.

M. (*Aside.*) Then she'll accept the sacrifice and think a little bit worse of him for the rest of her days.

G. (*Absently.*) I say, do you despise me?

M. 'Queer way of putting it. Have you ever been asked that question. Think a minute. What answer used you to give?

G. So bad as *that?* I'm not entitled to expect anything more; but it's a bit hard when one's best friend turns round and ——

M. So *I* have found. But you will have consolations — Bailiffs and Drains and Liquid Manure and the Primrose League, and, perhaps, if you're lucky, the Colonelcy of a Yeomanry Cav-al-ry Regiment — all uniform and no riding, I believe. How old are you?

G. Thirty-three. I know it's ——

M. At forty you'll be a fool of a J. P. landlord. At fifty you'll own a bath-chair, and The Brigadier, if he takes after you, will be fluttering the dovecotes of — what's the particular dunghill you're going to? Also, Mrs. Gadsby will be fat.

G. (*Limply.*) This is rather more than a joke.

M. D'you think so? Isn't cutting the Service a joke? It generally takes a man fifty years to arrive at it. You're quite right, though. It is more than a joke. You've managed it in thirty-three.

G. Don't make me feel worse than I do. Will it satisfy you if I own that I am a shirker, a skrimshanker, and a coward?

M. It will *not*, because I'm the only man in the

world who can talk to you like this without being knocked down. You mustn't take all that I've said to heart in this way. I only spoke — a lot of it at least — out of pure selfishness, because, because — Oh, damn it all, old man, — I don't know *what* I shall do without you. Of course, you've got the money and the place and all that — and there are two very good reasons why you should take care of yourself.

G. 'Doesn't make it any the sweeter. I'm backing out — I know I am. I always had a soft drop in me somewhere — and I daren't risk any danger to *them*.

M. Why in the world should you? You're bound to think of your family — bound to think. Er-hmm. If I wasn't a younger son I'd go too — be shot if I wouldn't!

G. Thank you, Jack. It's a kind lie, but it's the blackest you've told for some time. I know what I'm doing, and I'm going into it with my eyes open. Old man, I *can't* help it. What would you do if you were in my place?

M. (*Aside.*) 'Couldn't conceive any woman getting permanently between me and the Regiment. (*Aloud.*) 'Can't say. 'Very likely I should do no better. I'm sorry for you — awf'ly sorry — but "if them's your sentiments," I believe, I really do, that you are acting wisely.

G. Do you? I hope you do. (*In a whisper.*)

Jack, be very sure of yourself before you marry. I'm an ungrateful ruffian to say this, but marriage — even as good a marriage as mine has been — hampers a man's work, it cripples his sword-arm, and oh, it plays Hell with his notions of duty. Sometimes — good and sweet as she is — sometimes I could wish that I had kept my freedom — No, I don't mean that exactly.

MRS. G. (*Coming down verandah.*) What are you wagging your head over, Pip?

M. (*Turning quickly.*) Me, as usual. The old sermon. Your husband is recommending me to get married. 'Never saw such a one-idea'd man!

MRS. G. Well, why don't you? I daresay you would make some woman very happy.

G. There's the Law and the Prophets, Jack. Never mind the Regiment. Make a woman happy. (*Aside.*) O Lord!

M. We'll see. I must be off to make a Troop Cook desperately unhappy. I won't have the wily Hussar fed on Government Bullock Train shinbones — (*Hastily.*) Surely black ants can't be good for the Brigadier. He's picking 'em off the matting and eating 'em. Here, Señor Comandante Don Grubbynose, come and talk to me. (*Lifts* G. JUNIOR *in his arms.*) 'Want my watch? You won't be able to put it into your mouth, but you can try. (G. JUNIOR *drops watch, breaking dial and hands.*)

MRS. G. Oh, Captain Mafflin, I *am* so sorry! Jack, you bad, bad little villain! Ahhh!

M. It's not the least consequence, I assure you. He'd treat the world in the same way if he could get it into his hands. Everything's made to be played with and broken, isn't it, young 'un?

. . . . . .

MRS. G. Mafflin didn't at all like his watch being broken, though he was too polite to say so. It was entirely his fault for giving it to the child. Dem little puds are werry, werry feeble, aren't dey, my Jack-in-de-box? (*To* G.) What did he want to see you for?

G. Regimental shop, as usual.

MRS. G. The Regiment! *Always* the Regiment. On my word, I sometimes feel jealous of Mafflin.

G. (*Wearily.*) Poor old Jack? I don't think you need. Isn't it time for The *Butcha* to have his nap? Bring a chair out here, dear. I've got something to talk over with you.

AND THIS IS THE END OF THE STORY OF THE GADSBYS.

L'ENVOI

WHAT is the moral? Who rides may read.
When the night is thick and the tracks are blind.
A friend at a pinch is a friend indeed,
But a fool to wait for the laggard behind:
Down to Gehenna or up to the Throne
He travels the fastest who travels alone.

White hands cling to the tightened rein,
Slipp[illegible] the spur from the booted heel,
Tender[illegible] voices cry, "Turn again,"
Ri[illegible]s tarnish the scabbarded steel,
High ho[illegible]es faint on a warm hearth-stone —
He travels the fastest who travels alone.

One may fall, but he falls by himself —
Falls by himself with himself to blame;
One may attain and to him is the pelf,
Loot of the city in Gold or Fame:
Plunder of earth shall be all his own
Who travels the fastest and travels alone.

W[illegible]re the more ye be holpen and stayed —
[illegible]d by a friend in the hour of toil,
S[illegible]heretical song I have made -
[illegible]e labour and yours be the spoil.
W[illegible]d and the aid disown —
He [illegible]e the fastest who travels alone.

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High hopes faint on a warm hearth-stone —
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Loot of the city in Gold or Fame:
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Wherefore the more ye be holpen and stayed —
Stayed by a friend in the hour of toil,
Sing the heretical song I have made —
His be the labour and yours be the spoil.
Win by his aid and the aid disown —
He travels the fastest who travels alone.

L'ENVOI

WHAT is [illegible]? Who [illegible]
When [illegible]
A [illegible]
But [illegible]
Do [illegible]
He [illegible]

We [illegible] to the [illegible]
[illegible] from the [illegible]
[illegible]
Re[illegible]
Hig[illegible]
He[illegible]

O[illegible]

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WEE WILLIE WINKIE

WEE WILLIE WINKIE

"An officer and a gentleman."

His full name was Percival William Williams, but he picked up the other name in a nursery-book, and that was the end of the christened titles. His mother's *ayah* called him Willie-*Baba*, but as he never paid the faintest attention to anything that the *ayah* said, her wisdom did not help matters.

His father was the Colonel of the 195th, and as soon as Wee Willie Winkie was old enough to understand what Military Discipline meant, Colonel Williams put him under it. There was no other way of managing the child. When he was good for a week, he drew good-conduct pay; and when he was bad, he was deprived of his good-conduct stripe. Generally he was bad, for India offers many chances of going wrong to little six-year-olds.

Children resent familiarity from strangers, and Wee Willie Winkie was a very particular child. Once he accepted an acquaintance, he was graciously pleased to thaw. He accepted Brandis, a subaltern of the 195th, on sight. Brandis was

having tea at the Colonel's, and Wee Willie Winkie entered strong in the possession of a good-conduct badge won for not chasing the hens round the compound. He regarded Brandis with gravity for at least ten minutes, and then delivered himself of his opinion.

"I like you," said he slowly, getting off his chair and coming over to Brandis. "I like you. I shall call you Coppy, because of your hair. Do you *mind* being called Coppy? It is because of ve hair, you know."

Here was one of the most embarrassing of Wee Willie Winkie's peculiarities. He would look at a stranger for some time, and then, without warning or explanation, would give him a name. And the name stuck. No regimental penalties could break Wee Willie Winkie of this habit. He lost his good-conduct badge for christening the Commissioner's wife "Pobs"; but nothing that the Colonel could do made the Station forego the nickname, and Mrs. Collen remained "Pobs" till the end of her stay. So Brandis was christened "Coppy," and rose, therefore, in the estimation of the regiment.

If Wee Willie Winkie took an interest in any one, the fortunate man was envied alike by the mess and the rank and file. And in their envy lay no suspicion of self-interest. "The Colonel's son" was idolised on his own merits entirely.

Yet Wee Willie Winkie was not lovely. His face was permanently freckled, as his legs were permanently scratched, and in spite of his mother's almost tearful remonstrances he had insisted upon having his long yellow locks cut short in the military fashion. "I want my hair like Sergeant Tummil's," said Wee Willie Winkie, and, his father abetting, the sacrifice was accomplished.

Three weeks after the bestowal of his youthful affections on Lieutenant Brandis—henceforward to be called "Coppy" for the sake of brevity—Wee Willie Winkie was destined to behold strange things and far beyond his comprehension.

Coppy returned his liking with interest. Coppy had let him wear for five rapturous minutes his own big sword—just as tall as Wee Willie Winkie. Coppy had promised him a terrier puppy, and Coppy had permitted him to witness the miraculous operation of shaving. Nay, more—Coppy had said that even he, Wee Willie Winkie, would rise in time to the ownership of a box of shiny knives, a silver soap-box, and a silver-handled "sputter-brush," as Wee Willie Winkie called it. Decidedly, there was no one except his own father, who could give or take away good-conduct badges at pleasure, half so wise, strong, and valiant as Coppy with the Afghan and Egyptian medals on his breast. Why, then, should Coppy be guilty of the unmanly weakness of kiss-

ing — vehemently kissing — a "big girl," Miss Allardyce to wit? In the course of a morning ride Wee Willie Winkie had seen Coppy so doing, and, like the gentleman he was, had promptly wheeled round and cantered back to his groom, lest the groom should also see.

Under ordinary circumstances he would have spoken to his father, but he felt instinctively that this was a matter on which Coppy ought first to be consulted.

"Coppy," shouted Wee Willie Winkie, reining up outside that subaltern's bungalow early one morning — "I want to see you, Coppy!"

"Come in, young 'un," returned Coppy, who was at early breakfast in the midst of his dogs. "What mischief have you been getting into now?"

Wee Willie Winkie had done nothing notoriously bad for three days, and so stood on a pinnacle of virtue.

"*I've* been doing nothing bad," said he, curling himself into a long chair with a studious affectation of the Colonel's languor after a hot parade. He buried his freckled nose in a tea-cup and, with eyes staring roundly over the rim, asked: "I say, Coppy, is it pwoper to kiss big girls?"

"By Jove! You're beginning early. Who do you want to kiss?"

"No one. My muvver's always kissing me if I don't stop her. If it isn't pwoper, how was you

kissing Major Allardyce's big girl last morning, by ve canal?"

Coppy's brow wrinkled. He and Miss Allardyce had with great craft managed to keep their engagement secret for a fortnight. There were urgent and imperative reasons why Major Allardyce should not know how matters stood for at least another month, and this small marplot had discovered a great deal too much.

"I saw you," said Wee Willie Winkie calmly. "But ve *sais* didn't see. I said, '*Hut jao!*'"

"Oh, you had that much sense, you young Rip," groaned poor Coppy, half amused and half angry. "And how many people may you have told about it?"

"Only me myself. You didn't tell when I twied to wide ve buffalo ven my pony was lame; and I fought you wouldn't like."

"Winkie," said Coppy enthusiastically, shaking the small hand, "you're the best of good fellows. Look here, you can't understand all these things. One of these days — hang it, how can I make you see it! — I'm going to marry Miss Allardyce, and then she'll be Mrs. Coppy, as you say. If your young mind is so scandalised at the idea of kissing big girls, go and tell your father."

"What will happen?" said Wee Willie Winkie, who firmly believed that his father was omnipotent.

"I shall get into trouble," said Coppy, playing his trump card with an appealing look at the holder of the ace.

"Ven I won't," said Wee Willie Winkie briefly. "But my faver says it's un-man-ly to be always kissing, and I didn't fink *you'd* do vat, Coppy."

"I'm not always kissing, old chap. It's only now and then, and when you're bigger you'll do it too. Your father meant it's not good for little boys."

"Ah!" said Wee Willie Winkie, now fully enlightened. "It's like ve sputter-brush?"

"Exactly," said Coppy gravely.

"But I don't fink I'll ever want to kiss big girls, nor no one, 'cept my muvver. And I *must* do vat, you know."

There was a long pause, broken by Wee Willie Winkie.

"Are you fond of vis big girl, Coppy?"

"Awfully!" said Coppy.

"Fonder van you are of Bell or ve Butcha — or me?"

"It's in a different way," said Coppy. "You see, one of these days Miss Allardyce will belong to me, but you'll grow up and command the Regiment and — all sorts of things. It's quite different, you see."

"Very well," said Wee Willie Winkie, rising.

"If you're kind of a big girl I won't tell any one. I must go now."

Coppy rose and escorted his small guest to the door, adding—"You're the best of little fellows, Winkie. I tell you what. In many days from now you can tell if you like—tell any one you like."

Thus the secret of the Brandis-Allardyce engagement was dependent on a little child's word. Coppy, who knew Wee Willie Winkie's idea of truth, was at ease, for he felt that he would not break promises. Wee Willie Winkie betrayed a special and unusual interest in Miss Allardyce, and, slowly revolving round that embarrassed young lady, was used to regard her gravely with unwinking eye. He was trying to discover why Coppy should have kissed her. She was not half so nice as his own mother. On the other hand, she was Coppy's property, and would in time belong to him. Therefore it behooved him to treat her with as much respect as Coppy's big sword or shiny pistol.

The idea that he shared a great secret in common with Coppy kept Wee Willie Winkie unusually virtuous for three weeks. Then the Old Adam broke out, and he made what he called a "camp-fire" at the bottom of the garden. How could he have foreseen that the flying sparks would have lighted the Colonel's little hay-rick

and consumed a week's store for the horses? Sudden and swift was the punishment — deprivation of the good-conduct badge and, most sorrowful of all, two days' confinement to barracks — the house and verandah — coupled with the withdrawal of the light of his father's countenance.

He took the sentence like the man he strove to be, drew himself up with a quivering under-lip saluted, and, once clear of the room, ran to weep bitterly in his nursery — called by him "my quarters." Coppy came in the afternoon and attempted to console the culprit.

"I'm under awwest," said Wee Willie Winkie mournfully, "and I didn't ought to speak to you."

Very early the next morning he climbed on to the roof of the house — that was not forbidden — and beheld Miss Allardyce going for a ride.

"Where are you going?" cried Wee Willie Winkie.

"Across the river," she answered, and trotted forward.

Now the cantonment in which the 195th lay was bounded on the north by a river — dry in the winter. From his earliest years, Wee Willie Winkie had been forbidden to go across the river and had noted that even Coppy — the almost almighty Coppy — had never set foot beyond it. Wee Willie Winkie had once been read to, out of a big blue book, the history of the Princes

and the Goblins—a most wonderful tale of a land where the Goblins were always warring with the children of men until they were defeated by one Curdie. Ever since that date it seemed to him that the bare black and purple hills across the river were inhabited by Goblins, and, in truth, every one had said that there lived the Bad Men. Even in his own house the lower halves of the windows were covered with green paper on account of the Bad Men who might, if allowed clear view, fire into peaceful drawing-rooms and comfortable bedrooms. Certainly, beyond the river, which was the end of all the Earth, lived the Bad Men. And here was Major Allardyce's big girl, Coppy's property, preparing to venture into their borders! What would Coppy say if anything happened to her? If the Goblins ran off with her as they did with Curdie's Princess? She must at all hazards be turned back.

The house was still. Wee Willie Winkie reflected for a moment on the very terrible wrath of his father; and then — broke his arrest! It was a crime unspeakable. The low sun threw his shadow, very large and very black, on the trim garden-paths, as he went down to the stables and ordered his pony. It seemed to him in the hush of the dawn that all the big world had been bidden to stand still and look at Wee Willie Winkie guilty of mutiny. The drowsy *sais* gave him his

mount, and, since the one great sin made all others insignificant, Wee Willie Winkie said that he was going to ride over to Coppy Sahib, and went out at a foot-pace, stepping on the soft mould of the flower-borders.

The devastating track of the pony's feet was the last misdeed that cut him off from all sympathy of Humanity. He turned into the road, leaned forward, and rode as fast as the pony could put foot to the ground in the direction of the river.

But the liveliest of twelve-two ponies can do little against the long canter of a Waler. Miss Allardyce was far ahead, had passed through the crops, beyond the Police-posts, when all the guards were asleep, and her mount was scattering the pebbles of the river-bed as Wee Willie Winkie left the cantonment and British India behind him. Bowed forward and still flogging, Wee Willie Winkie shot into Afghan territory, and could just see Miss Allardyce a black speck flickering across the stony plain. The reason of her wandering was simple enough. Coppy, in a tone of too-hastily-assumed authority, had told her over night that she must not ride out by the river. And she had gone to prove her own spirit and teach Coppy a lesson.

Almost at the foot of the inhospitable hills, Wee Willie Winkie saw the Waler blunder and come down heavily. Miss Allardyce struggled

clear, but her ankle had been severely twisted, and she could not stand. Having fully shown her spirit, she wept, and was surprised by the apparition of a white, wide-eyed child in khaki, on a nearly spent pony.

"Are you badly, badly hurted?" shouted Wee Willie Winkie, as soon as he was within range. "You didn't ought to be here."

"I don't know," said Miss Allardyce ruefully, ignoring the reproof. "Good gracious, child, what are *you* doing here?"

"You said you was going acwoss ve wiver," panted Wee Willie Winkie, throwing himself off his pony. "And nobody—not even Coppy—must go acwoss ve wiver, and I came after you ever so hard, but you wouldn't stop, and now you've hurted yourself, and Coppy will be angwy wiv me, and—I've bwoken my awwest! I've bwoken my awwest!"

The future Colonel of the 195th sat down and sobbed. In spite of the pain in her ankle, the girl was moved.

"Have you ridden all the way from cantonments, little man? What for?"

"You belonged to Coppy. Coppy told me so!" wailed Wee Willie Winkie disconsolately. "I saw him kissing you, and he said he was fonder of you van Bell or ve Butcha or me. And so I came. You must get up and come back. You

didn't ought to be here. Vis is a bad place, and I've bwoken my awwest."

"I can't move, Winkie," said Miss Allardyce, with a groan. "I've hurt my foot. What shall I do?"

She showed a readiness to weep anew, which steadied Wee Willie Winkie, who had been brought up to believe that tears were the depth of unmanliness. Still, when one is as great a sinner as Wee Willie Winkie, even a man may be permitted to break down.

"Winkie," said Miss Allardyce, "when you've rested a little, ride back and tell them to send out something to carry me back in. It hurts fearfully."

The child sat still for a little time, and Miss Allardyce closed her eyes; the pain was nearly making her faint. She was roused by Wee Willie Winkie tying up the reins on his pony's neck and setting it free with a vicious cut of his whip that made it whicker. The little animal headed towards the cantonments.

"Oh, Winkie! What are you doing?"

"Hush!" said Wee Willie Winkie. "Vere's a man coming — one of ve Bad Men. I must stay wiv you. My faver says a man must *alway* look after a girl. Jack will go home, and ver vey'll come and look for us. Vat's why I let him go."

Not one man, but two or three, had appeared

from behind the rocks of the hills, and the heart of Wee Willie Winkie sank within him, for just in this manner were the Goblins wont to steal out and vex Curdie's soul. Thus had they played in Curdie's garden (he had seen the picture), and thus had they frightened the Princess's nurse. He heard them talking to each other, and recognised with joy the bastard Pushto that he had picked up from one of his father's grooms lately dismissed. People who spoke that tongue could not be the Bad Men. They were only natives, after all.

They came up to the boulders on which Miss Allardyce's horse had blundered.

Then rose from the rock Wee Willie Winkie, child of the Dominant Race, aged six and three-quarters, and said briefly and emphatically, "*Jao!*" The pony had crossed the river-bed.

The man laughed, and laughter from natives was the one thing Wee Willie Winkie could not tolerate. He asked them what they wanted and why they did not depart. Other men with most evil faces and crooked-stocked guns crept out of the shadows of the hills, till, soon, Wee Willie Winkie was face to face with an audience some twenty strong. Miss Allardyce screamed.

"Who are you?" said one of the men.

"I am the Colonel Sahib's son, and my order is that you go at once. You black men are frightening the Miss Sahib. One of you must run into

cantonments and take the news that the Miss Sahib has hurt herself, and that the Colonel's son is here with her."

"Put our feet into the trap?" was the laughing reply. "Hear this boy's speech!"

"Say that I sent you — I, the Colonel's son. They will give you money."

"What is the use of this talk? Take up the child and the girl, and we can at least ask for the ransom. Ours are the villages on the heights," said a voice in the background.

These *were* the Bad Men — worse than Goblins — and it needed all Wee Willie Winkie's training to prevent him from bursting into tears. But he felt that to cry before a native, excepting only his mother's *ayah*, would be an infamy greater than any mutiny. Moreover, he, as future Colonel of the 105th, had that grim regiment at his back.

"Are you going to carry us away?" said Wee Willie Winkie, very blanched and uncomfortable.

"Yes, my little Sahib Bahadur," said the tallest of the men, "and eat you afterwards."

"That is child's talk," said Wee Willie Winkie. "Men do not eat men."

A yell of laughter interrupted him, but he went on firmly—"And if you do carry us away, I tell you that all my regiment will come up in a day and kill you all without leaving one. Who will take my message to the Colonel Sahib?"

Speech in any vernacular — and Wee Willie Winkie had a colloquial acquaintance with three — was easy to the boy who could not yet manage his "r's" and "th's" aright.

Another man joined the conference, crying, "O foolish men! What this babe says is true. He is the heart's heart of those white troops. For the sake of peace let them go both, for if he be taken, the regiment will break loose and gut the valley. *Our* villages are in the valley, and we shall not escape. That regiment are devils. They broke Khoda Yar's breastbone with kicks when he tried to take the rifles; and if we touch this child they will fire and rape and plunder for a month till nothing remains. Better to send a man back to take the message and get a reward. I say that this child is their God, and that they will spare none of us, nor our women, if we harm him."

It was Din Mahommed, the dismissed groom of the Colonel, who made the diversion, and an angry and heated discussion followed. Wee Willie Winkie, standing over Miss Allardyce, waited the upshot. Surely his "wegiment," his own "wegiment," would not desert him if they knew of his extremity.

. . . . . .

The riderless pony brought the news to the 195th, though there had been consternation in the

Colonel's household for an hour before. The little beast came in through the parade-ground in front of the main barracks, where the men were settling down to play Spoil-five till the afternoon. Devlin, the Colour-Sergeant of E Company, glanced at the empty saddle and tumbled through the barrack-rooms, kicking up each Room Corporal as he passed. "Up, ye beggars! There's something happened to the Colonel's son," he shouted.

"He couldn't fall off! S'elp me, 'e *couldn't* fall off," blubbered a drummer-boy. "Go an' hunt acrost the river. He's over there if he's anywhere, an' maybe those Pathans have got 'im. For the love o' Gawd don't look for 'im in the nullahs! Let's go over the river."

"There's sense in Mott yet," said Devlin. "E Company, double out to the river — sharp!"

So E Company, in its shirt-sleeves mainly, doubled for the dear life, and in the rear toiled the perspiring Sergeant, adjuring it to double yet faster. The cantonment was alive with the men of the 195th hunting for Wee Willie Winkie, and the Colonel finally overtook E Company, far too exhausted to swear, struggling in the pebbles of the river-bed.

Up the hill under which Wee Willie Winkie's Bad Men were discussing the wisdom of carrying off the child and the girl, a look-out fired two shots.

"What have I said?" shouted Din Mahommed. "There is the warning!" The *pulton* are out already and are coming across the plain! Get away! Let us not be seen with the boy!"

The men waited for an instant, and then, as another shot was fired, withdrew into the hills, silently as they had appeared.

"The wegiment is coming," said Wee Willie Winkie confidently to Miss Allardyce, "and it's all wight. Don't cwy!"

He needed the advice himself, for ten minutes later, when his father came up, he was weeping bitterly with his head in Miss Allardyce's lap.

And the men of the 195th carried him home with shouts and rejoicings; and Coppy, who had ridden a horse into a lather, met him, and, to his intense disgust, kissed him openly in the presence of the men.

But there was balm for his dignity. His father assured him that not only would the breaking of arrest be condoned, but that the good-conduct badge would be restored as soon as his mother could sew it on his blouse-sleeve. Miss Allardyce had told the Colonel a story that made him proud of his son.

"She belonged to you, Coppy," said Wee Willie Winkie, indicating Miss Allardyce with a grimy forefinger. "I *knew* she didn't ought to go acwoss

ve wiver, and I knew ve wegiment would come t
me if I sent Jack home."

"You're a hero, Winkie," said Coppy — "
pukka hero!"

"I don't know what vat means," said Wee Wi
lie Winkie, "but you mustn't call me Winkie an
no more. I'm Percival Will'am Will'ams."

And in this manner did Wee Willie Wink
enter into his manhood.

HIS MAJESTY THE KING

Where the word of a King is, there is power: And who may say unto him — What doest thou?

"YETH! And Chimo to sleep at ve foot of ve bed, and ve pink pikky-book, and ve bwead — 'cause I will be hungwy in ve night — and vat's all, Miss Biddums. And now give me one kiss and I'll go to sleep. — So! Kite quiet. Ow! Ve pink pikky-book has slidded under ve pillow and ve bread is cwumbling! Miss Biddums! Miss *Bid*-dums! I'm *so* uncomfy! Come and tuck me up, Miss Biddums."

His Majesty the King was going to bed; and poor, patient Miss Biddums, who had advertised herself humbly as a "young person, European, accustomed to the care of little children," was forced to wait upon his royal caprices. The going to bed was always a lengthy process, because His Majesty had a convenient knack of forgetting which of his many friends, from the *mehter's* son to the Commissioner's daughter, he had prayed for, and, lest the Deity should take offence, was used to toil through his little prayers, in all rever-

ence, five times in one evening. His Majesty th King believed in the efficacy of prayer as devoutl as he believed in Chimo the patient spaniel, o Miss Biddums, who could reach him down hi gun — "with cursuffun caps — *reel* ones" — fron the upper shelves of the big nursery cupboard.

At the door of the nursery his authority stopped Beyond lay the empire of his father and mothe — two very terrible people who had no time t waste upon His Majesty the King. His voic was lowered when he passed the frontier of hi own dominions, his actions were fettered, and hi soul was filled with awe because of the grim ma who lived among a wilderness of pigeon-hole and the most fascinating pieces of red tape, an the wonderful woman who was always gettin into or stepping out of the big carriage.

To the one belonged the mysteries of the "*dufta* room," to the other the great, reflected wilderne of the "Memsahib's room," where the shiny, scente dresses hung on pegs, miles and miles up in th air, and the just-seen plateau of the toilet-tabl revealed an acreage of speckly combs, broidere "hanafitch-bags," and "white-headed" brushes.

There was no room for His Majesty the Kin either in official reserve or worldly gorgeousnes He had discovered that, ages and ages ago — be fore even Chimo came to the house, or Miss Bid dums had ceased grizzling over a packet of greas

letters which appeared to be her chief treasure on earth. His Majesty the King, therefore, wisely confined himself to his own territories, where only Miss Biddums, and she feebly, disputed his sway.

From Miss Biddums he had picked up his simple theology and welded it to the legends of gods and devils that he had learned in the servants' quarters.

To Miss Biddums he confided with equal trust his tattered garments and his more serious griefs. She would make everything whole. She knew exactly how the Earth had been born, and had reassured the trembling soul of His Majesty the King that terrible time in July when it rained continuously for seven days and seven nights, and —there was no Ark ready and all the ravens had flown away! She was the most powerful person with whom he was brought into contact—always excepting the two remote and silent people beyond the nursery door.

How was His Majesty the King to know that, six years ago, in the summer of his birth, Mrs. Austell, turning over her husband's papers, had come upon the intemperate letter of a foolish woman who had been carried away by the silent man's strength and personal beauty? How could he tell what evil the overlooked slip of notepaper had wrought in the mind of a desperately jealous wife? How could he, despite his wisdom, guess that his mother had chosen to make of it excuse

for a bar and a division between herself and her husband, that strengthened and grew harder to break with each year; that she, having unearthed this skeleton in the cupboard, had trained it into a household God which should be about their path and about their bed, and poison all their ways?

These things were beyond the province of His Majesty the King. He only knew that his father was daily absorbed in some mysterious work for a thing called the *Sirkar*, and that his mother was the victim alternately of the *Nautch* and the *Burrakhana*. To these entertainments she was escorted by a Captain-Man for whom His Majesty the King had no regard.

"He *doesn't* laugh," he argued with Miss Biddums, who would fain have taught him charity. "He only makes faces wiv his mouf, and when he wants to o-muse me I am *not* o-mused." And His Majesty the King shook his head as one who knew the deceitfulness of this world.

Morning and evening it was his duty to salute his father and mother — the former with a grave shake of the hand, and the latter with an equally grave kiss. Once, indeed, he had put his arm round his mother's neck, in the fashion he used towards Miss Biddums. The openwork of his sleeve-edge caught in an earring, and the last stage of His Majesty's little overture was a suppressed scream and summary dismissal to the nursery.

"It is w'ong," thought His Majesty the King, "to hug Memsahibs wiv fings in veir ears. I will amember." He never repeated the experiment.

Miss Biddums, it must be confessed, spoilt him as much as his nature admitted, in some sort of recompense for what she called "the hard ways of his Papa and Mamma." She, like her charge, knew nothing of the trouble between man and wife — the savage contempt for a woman's stupidity on the one side, or the dull, rankling anger on the other. Miss Biddums had looked after many little children in her time, and served in many establishments. Being a discreet woman, she observed little and said less, and when her pupils went over the sea to the Great Unknown, which she, with touching confidence in her hearers, called "Home," packed up her slender belongings and sought for employment afresh, lavishing all her love on each successive batch of ingrates. Only His Majesty the King had repaid her affection with interest; and in his uncomprehending ears she had told the tale of nearly all her hopes, her aspirations, the hopes that were dead, and the dazzling glories of her ancestral home in "*Cal*cutta, close to Wellington Square."

Everything above the average was in the eyes of His Majesty the King "Calcutta good." When Miss Biddums had crossed his royal will, he re-

versed the epithet to vex that estimable lady, an all things evil were, until the tears of repentanc swept away spite, "Calcutta bad."

Now and again Miss Biddums begged for hir the rare pleasure of a day in the society of th Commissioner's child — the wilful four-year-ol Patsie, who, to the intense amazement of H Majesty the King, was idolised by her parent On thinking the question out at length, by road unknown to those who have left childhood behin he came to the conclusion that Patsie was pette because she wore a big blue sash and yello hair.

This precious discovery he kept to himself. Th yellow hair was absolutely beyond his power, hi own tousled wig being potato-brown; but somethin might be done towards the blue sash. He tied large knot in his mosquito-curtains in order to r member to consult Patsie on their next meetin She was the only child he had ever spoken to, an almost the only one that he had ever seen. Th little memory and the very large and ragged kn held good.

"Patsie, lend me your blue wiband," said Hi Majesty the King.

"You'll bewy it," said Patsie doubtfully, min ful of certain atrocities committed on her doll.

"No, I won't — twoofanhonour. It's for me t wear."

"Pooh!" said Patsie. "Boys don't wear sa-ashes. Zey's only for dirls."

"I didn't know." The face of His Majesty the King fell.

"Who wants ribands? Are you playing horses, chickabiddies?" said the Commissioner's wife, stepping into the verandah.

"Toby wanted my sash," explained Patsie.

"I don't now," said His Majesty the King hastily, feeling that with one of these terrible "grown-ups" his poor little secret would be shamelessly wrenched from him, and perhaps — most burning desecration of all — laughed at.

"I'll give you a cracker-cap," said the Commissioner's wife. "Come along with me, Toby, and we'll choose it."

The cracker-cap was a stiff, three-pointed vermilion-and-tinsel splendour. His Majesty the King fitted it on his royal brow. The Commissioner's wife had a face that children instinctively trusted, and her action, as she adjusted the toppling middle spike, was tender.

"Will it do as well?" stammered His Majesty the King.

"As what, little one?"

"As ve wiban?"

"Oh, quite. Go and look at yourself in the glass."

The words were spoken in all sincerity and to

help forward any absurd "dressing-up" amusement that the children might take into their minds. But the young savage has a keen sense of the ludicrous. His Majesty the King swung the great cheval-glass down, and saw his head crowned with the staring horror of a fool's cap — a thing which his father would rend to pieces if it ever came into his office. He plucked it off, and burst into tears.

"Toby," said the Commissioner's wife gravely, "you shouldn't give way to temper. I am very sorry to see it. It's wrong."

His Majesty the King sobbed inconsolably, and the heart of Patsie's mother was touched. She drew the child on to her knee. Clearly it was not temper alone.

"What is it, Toby? Won't you tell me? Aren't you well?"

The torrent of sobs and speech met, and fought for a time, with chokings and gulpings and gasps. Then, in a sudden rush, His Majesty the King was delivered of a few inarticulate sounds, followed by the words — "Go a — way, you — dirty — little debbil!"

"Toby! What do you mean?"

"It's what he'd say. I *know* it is! He said vat when vere was only a little, little eggy mess on my t-t-unic; and he'd say it again, and laugh, if I went in wif vat on my head."

"Who would say that?"

"M-m-my Papa! And I fought if I had ve blue wiban, he'd let me play in ve waste-paper basket under ve table."

"*What* blue riband, childie?"

"Ve same vat Patsie had — ve big blue wiban w-w-wound my t-ttummy!"

"What is it, Toby? There's something on your mind. Tell me all about it, and perhaps I can help."

"Isn't anyfing," sniffed His Majesty, mindful of his manhood, and raising his head from the motherly bosom upon which it was resting. "I only fought vat you — you petted Patsie 'cause she had ve blue wiban, and — and if I'd had ve blue wiban too, m-my Papa w-would pet me."

The secret was out, and His Majesty the King sobbed bitterly in spite of the arms around him, and the murmur of comfort on his heated little forehead.

Enter Patsie tumultuously, embarrassed by several lengths of the Commissioner's pet *mabseer*-rod. "Tum along, Toby! Zere's a *chu-chu* lizard in ze *chick*, and I've told Chimo to watch him till we tum. If we poke him wiz zis his tail will go *wiggle-wiggle* and fall off. Tum along! I can't weach."

"I'm comin'," said His Majesty the King, climb-

wn from the Commissioner's wife's knee
hasty kiss.

minutes later, the *chu-chu* lizard's tail was
ng on the matting of the verandah, and the
n were gravely poking it with splinters from
k, to urge its exhausted vitality into "just
ggle more, 'cause it doesn't hurt *chu-chu*."
Commissioner's wife stood in the doorway
itched — "Poor little mite! A blue sash
my own precious Patsie! I wonder if the
us, or we who love them best, ever under-
hat goes on in their topsy-turvy little heads."
went indoors to devise a tea for His Majesty
ng.

eir souls aren't in their tummies at that
this climate," said the Commissioner's wife,
ey are not far off. I wonder if I could make
ustell understand. Poor little fellow!"

h simple craft, the Commissioner's wife
on Mrs. Austell and spoke long and lov-
bout children, inquiring specially for His
y the King.

's with his governess," said Mrs. Austell,
e tone showed that she was not interested.
Commissioner's wife, unskilled in the art
, continued her questionings. "I don't
' said Mrs. Austell. "These things are left
s Biddums, and, of course, she does not ill-
e child."

The Commissioner's wife left hastily. The last sentence jarred upon her nerves. "Doesn't *ill-treat* the child! As if that were all! I wonder what Tom would say if I only 'didn't ill-treat' Patsie!"

Thenceforward His Majesty the King was an honoured guest at the Commissioner's house, and the chosen friend of Patsie, with whom he blundered into as many scrapes as the compound and the servants' quarters afforded. Patsie's Mamma was always ready to give counsel, help, and sympathy, and, if need were and callers few, to enter into their games with an abandon that would have shocked the sleek-haired subalterns who squirmed painfully in their chairs when they came to call on her whom they profanely nicknamed "Mother Bunch."

Yet, in spite of Patsie and Patsie's Mamma, and the love that these two lavished upon him, His Majesty the King fell grievously from grace, and committed no less a sin than that of theft—unknown, it is true, but burdensome.

There came a man to the door one day, when His Majesty was playing in the hall and the bearer had gone to dinner, with a packet for His Majesty's Mamma. And he put it upon the hall table, and said that there was no answer, and departed.

Presently, the pattern of the dado ceased to interest His Majesty, while the packet, a white, neatly wrapped one of fascinating shape, interested

sible. Now and again he determined to put hir self in the path of the beautifully attired lady as sl was going out, and explain that he and no one el was the possessor of a "'parkle cwown," most bea tiful and quite unenquired for. But she pass hurriedly to her carriage, and the opportunity w gone before His Majesty the King could draw t deep breath which clinches noble resolve. T dread secret cut him off from Miss Biddums, P sie, and the Commissioner's wife, and — doub hard fate — when he brooded over it Patsie sai and told her mother, that he was cross.

The days were very long to His Majesty t King and the nights longer still. Miss Biddur had informed him, more than once, what was t ultimate destiny of "fieves," and when he pass the interminable mud flanks of the Central Jail, shook in his little strapped shoes.

But release came after an afternoon spent playing boats by the edge of the tank at the bo tom of the garden. His Majesty the King we to tea, and, for the first time in his memory, t meal revolted him. His nose was very cold, a his cheeks were burning hot. There was a weig about his feet, and he pressed his head several tim to make sure that it was not swelling as he sat.

"I feel vevy funny," said His Majesty the Kin rubbing his nose. "Vere's a buzz-buzz in n head."

He went to bed quietly. Miss Biddums was out, and the bearer undressed him.

The sin of the "'parkle cwown" was forgotten in the acuteness of the discomfort to which he roused after a leaden sleep of some hours. He was thirsty, and the bearer had forgotten to leave the drinking-water. "Miss Biddums! Miss Biddums! I'm so kirsty!"

No answer. Miss Biddums had leave to attend the wedding of a Calcutta schoolmate. His Majesty the King had forgotten that.

"I want a dwink of water!" he cried, but his voice was dried up in his throat. "I want a dwink! Vere is ve glass?"

He sat up in bed and looked round. There was a murmur of voices from the other side of the nursery door. It was better to face the terrible unknown than to choke in the dark. He slipped out of bed, but his feet were strangely wilful, and he reeled once or twice. Then he pushed the door open and staggered — a puffed and purple-faced little figure — into the brilliant light of the dining-room full of pretty ladies.

"I'm vevy hot! I'm vevy uncomfitivle," moaned His Majesty the King, clinging to the portière, "and vere's no water in ve glass, and I'm *so* kirsty. Give me a dwink of water."

An apparition in black and white — His Majesty the King could hardly see distinctly — lifted

him up to the level of the table, and felt his wrist and forehead. The water came, and he drank deeply, his teeth chattering against the edge of the tumbler. Then every one seemed to go away—every one except the huge man in black and white, who carried him back to his bed; the mother and father following. And the sin of the "'parkle cwown" rushed back and took possession of the terrified soul.

"I'm a fief!" he gasped. "I want to tell Miss Biddums vat I'm a fief. Vere is Miss Biddums?"

Miss Biddums had come and was bending over him. "I'm a fief," he whispered. "A fief—like ve men in ve pwison. But I'll tell now. I took—I tookt ve 'parkle cwown when ve man that came left it in ve hall. I bwoke ve paper and ve little bwown box, and it looked shiny, and I tookt it to play wif, and I was afwaid. It's in ve dooly-box, at ve bottom. No one *never* asked for it, but I was afwaid. Oh, go an' get ve dooly box!"

Miss Biddums obediently stooped to the lower shelf of the almirah and unearthed the big paper box in which His Majesty the King kept his dearest possessions. Under the tin soldiers, and a layer of mud pellets for a pellet-bow, winked and blazed a diamond star, wrapped roughly in a half sheet of notepaper whereon were a few words.

Somebody was crying at the head of the bed

and a man's hand touched the forehead of His Majesty the King, who grasped the packet and spread it on the bed.

"Vat is ve 'parkle cwown," he said, and wept bitterly; for now that he had made restitution he would fain have kept the shining splendour with him.

"It concerns you too," said a voice at the head of the bed. "Read the note. This is not the time to keep back anything."

The note was curt, very much to the point, and signed by a single initial. "*If you wear this tomorrow night I shall know what to expect.*" The date was three weeks old.

A whisper followed, and the deeper voice returned: "And you drifted as far apart as *that!* I think it makes us quits now, doesn't it? Oh, can't we drop this folly once and for all? Is it worth it, darling?"

"Kiss me too," said His Majesty the King dreamily. "You isn't *vevy* angwy, is you?"

The fever burned itself out, and His Majesty the King slept.

When he waked, it was in a new world—peopled by his father and mother as well as Miss Biddums: and there was much love in that world and no morsel of fear, and more petting than was good for several little boys. His Majesty the King was too young to moralise on the uncer-

tainty of things human, or he would have been impressed with the singular advantages of crime — ay, black sin. Behold, he had stolen the "'parkle cwown," and his reward was Love, and the right to play in the waste-paper basket under the table "for always."

. . . . . .

He trotted over to spend an afternoon with Patsie, and the Commissioner's wife would have kissed him. "No, not vere," said His Majesty the King, with superb insolence, fencing one corner of his mouth with his hand. "Vat's my Mamma's place — vere *she* kisses me."

"Oh!" said the Commissioner's wife briefly. Then to herself: "Well, I suppose I ought to be glad for his sake. Children are selfish little grubs, and — I've got my Patsie."

BAA BAA, BLACK SHEEP

Baa Baa, Black Sheep,
Have you any wool?
Yes, Sir, yes, Sir, three bags full.
One for the Master, one for the Dame—
None for the Little Boy that cries down the lane.
Nursery Rhyme.

The First Bag

When I was in my father's house, I was in a better place.

They were putting Punch to bed—the *ayah* and the *hamal* and Meeta, the big *Surti* boy with the red and gold turban. Judy, already tucked inside her mosquito-curtains, was nearly asleep. Punch had been allowed to stay up for dinner. Many privileges had been accorded to Punch within the last ten days, and a greater kindness from the people of his world had encompassed his ways and works, which were mostly obstreperous. He sat on the edge of his bed and swung his bare legs defiantly.

"Punch-*baba* going to bye-lo?" said the *ayah* suggestively.

"No," said Punch. "Punch-*baba* wants th
story about the Ranee that was turned into
tiger. Meeta must tell it, and the *hamal* sha
hide behind the door and make tiger-noises at th
proper time."

"But Judy-*baba* will wake up," said the *ayah*.

"Judy-*baba* is waked," piped a small voi
from the mosquito-curtains. "There was a Ran
that lived at Delhi. Go on, Meeta," and she fe
fast asleep again while Meeta began the story.

Never had Punch secured the telling of th
tale with so little opposition. He reflected for
long time. The *hamal* made the tiger-noises
twenty different keys.

"'Top!" said Punch authoritatively. "Wh
doesn't Papa come in and say he is going to gi
me *put-put?*"

"Punch-*baba* is going away," said the *aya*
"In another week there will be no Punch-*baba*
pull my hair any more." She sighed softly, for th
boy of the household was very dear to her heart.

"Up the Ghauts in a train?" said Punc
standing on his bed. "All the way to Nassi
where the Ranee-Tiger lives?"

"Not to Nassick this year, little Sahib," sa
Meeta, lifting him on his shoulder. "Down
the sea where the cocoanuts are thrown, and acro
the sea in a big ship. Will you take Meeta wi
you to *Belait?*"

"You shall all come," said Punch, from the height of Meeta's strong arms. "Meeta and the *ayah* and the *hamal* and Bhini-in-the-Garden, and the salaam-Captain-Sahib-snake-man."

There was no mockery in Meeta's voice when he replied—"Great is the Sahib's favour," and laid the little man down in the bed, while the *ayah*, sitting in the moonlight at the doorway, lulled him to sleep with an interminable canticle such as they sing in the Roman Catholic Church at Parel. Punch curled himself into a ball and slept.

Next morning Judy shouted that there was a rat in the nursery, and thus he forgot to tell her the wonderful news. It did not much matter, for Judy was only three and she would not have understood. But Punch was five; and he knew that going to England would be much nicer than a trip to Nassick.

. . . . . .

Papa and Mamma sold the brougham and the piano, and stripped the house, and curtailed the allowance of crockery for the daily meals, and took long council together over a bundle of letters bearing the Rocklington postmark.

"The worst of it is that one can't be certain of anything," said Papa, pulling his moustache. "The letters in themselves are excellent, and the terms are moderate enough."

"The worst of it is that the children will grow up away from me," thought Mamma: but she did not say it aloud.

"We are only one case among hundreds," said Papa bitterly. "You shall go Home again in five years, dear."

"Punch will be ten then — and Judy eight Oh, how long and long and long the time will be And we have to leave them among strangers."

"Punch is a cheery little chap. He's sure t make friends wherever he goes."

"And who could help loving my Ju?"

They were standing over the cots in the nurser late at night, and I think that Mamma was cryin softly. After Papa had gone away, she knelt dow by the side of Judy's cot. The *ayah* saw her an put up a prayer that the Memsahib might never fin the love of her children taken away from her an given to a stranger.

Mamma's own prayer was a slightly illogica one. Summarised it ran: "Let strangers love m children and be as good to them as I should b but let *me* preserve their love and their confidenc for ever and ever. Amen." Punch scratche himself in his sleep, and Judy moaned a little.

Next day they all went down to the sea, an there was a scene at the Apollo Bunder when Punc discovered that Meeta could not come too, an Judy learned that the *ayah* must be left behin

But Punch found a thousand fascinating things in the rope, block, and steam-pipe line on the big P. and O. steamer long before Meeta and the *ayah* had dried their tears.

"Come back, Punch-*baba*," said the *ayah*.

"Come back," said Meeta, "and be a *Burra Sahib*" (a big man).

"Yes," said Punch, lifted up in his father's arms to wave good-bye. "Yes, I will come back, and I will be a *Burra Sahib Bahadur!*" (a very big man indeed).

At the end of the first day Punch demanded to be set down in England, which he was certain must be close at hand. Next day there was a merry breeze, and Punch was very sick. "When I come back to Bombay," said Punch on his recovery, "I will come by the road — in a broom-*ghbarri*. This is a very naughty ship."

The Swedish boatswain consoled him, and he modified his opinions as the voyage went on. There was so much to see and to handle and ask questions about that Punch nearly forgot the *ayah* and Meeta and the *hamal*, and with difficulty remembered a few words of the Hindustani, once his second-speech.

But Judy was much worse. The day before the steamer reached Southampton, Mamma asked her if she would not like to see the *ayah* again. Judy's blue eyes turned to the stretch of sea that

had swallowed all her tiny past, and said: "*Ayah*. What *ayah?*"

Mamma cried over her, and Punch marvelled. It was then that he heard for the first time Mamma's passionate appeal to him never to let Judy forget Mamma. Seeing that Judy was young ridiculously young, and that Mamma, every evening for four weeks past, had come into the cabin to sing her and Punch to sleep with a mysterious rune that he called "Sonny, my soul," Punch could not understand what Mamma meant. But he strove to do his duty; for, the moment Mamma left the cabin, he said to Judy, "Ju, you bemember Mamma?"

"'Torse I do," said Judy.

"Then *always* bemember Mamma, 'r else won't give you the paper ducks that the red-haired Captain Sahib cut out for me."

So Judy promised always to "bemember Mamma."

Many and many a time was Mamma's command laid upon Punch, and Papa would say the same thing with an insistence that awed the child.

"You must make haste and learn to write, Punch," said Papa, "and then you'll be able to write letters to us in Bombay."

"I'll come into your room," said Punch, and Papa choked.

Papa and Mamma were always choking in those

days. If Punch took Judy to task for not "be-membering," they choked. If Punch sprawled on the sofa in the Southampton lodging-house and sketched his future in purple and gold, they choked; and so they did if Judy put her mouth up for a kiss.

Through many days all four were vagabonds on the face of the earth — Punch with no one to give orders to, Judy too young for anything, and Papa and Mamma grave, distracted, and choking.

"Where," demanded Punch, wearied of a loathsome contrivance on four wheels with a mound of luggage atop —"*where* is our broom-*gharri?* This thing talks so much that *I* can't talk. Where is our *own* broom-*gharri?* When I was at Band-stand before we comed away, I asked Inverarity Sahib why he was sitting in it, and he said it was his own. And I said, 'I will *give* it you,'— I like Inverarity Sahib,— and I said, 'Can you put your legs through the pully-wag loops by the windows?' And Inverarity Sahib said No, and laughed. *I* can put my legs through the pully-wag loops. I can put my legs through *these* pully-wag loops. Look! Oh, Mamma's crying again! I didn't know I wasn't not to do *so*."

Punch drew his legs out of the loops of the four-wheeler; the door opened, and he slid to the earth, in a cascade of parcels, at the door of an austere little villa whose gates bore the legend

"Downe Lodge." Punch gathered himself together and eyed the house with disfavour. It stood on a sandy road, and a cold wind tickled his knickerbockered legs.

"Let us go away," said Punch. "This is not a pretty place."

But Mamma and Papa and Judy had left the cab, and all the luggage was being taken into the house. At the doorstep stood a woman in black and she smiled largely, with dry, chapped lips. Behind her was a man, big, bony, gray, and lame as to one leg — behind him a boy of twelve, black haired and oily in appearance. Punch surveyed the trio, and advanced without fear, as he had been accustomed to do in Bombay when callers came and he happened to be playing in the verandah.

"How do you do?" said he. "I am Punch. But they were all looking at the luggage — all except the gray man, who shook hands with Punch, and said he was "a smart little fellow." There was much running about and banging of boxes, and Punch curled himself up on the sofa in the dining-room and considered things.

"I don't like these people," said Punch. "But never mind. We'll go away soon. We have always went away soon from everywhere. I wish we was gone back to Bombay *soon*."

The wish bore no fruit. For six days Mamma

wept at intervals, and showed the woman in black all Punch's clothes — a liberty which Punch resented. "But p'raps she's a new white *ayah*," he thought. "I'm to call her Antirosa, but she doesn't call *me* Sahib. She says just Punch," he confided to Judy. "What is Antirosa?"

Judy didn't know. Neither she nor Punch had heard anything of an animal called an aunt. Their world had been Papa and Mamma, who knew everything, permitted everything, and loved everybody — even Punch when he used to go into the garden at Bombay and fill his nails with mould after the weekly nail-cutting, because, as he explained between two strokes of the slipper to his sorely tried Father, his fingers "felt so new at the ends."

In an undefined way Punch judged it advisable to keep both parents between himself and the woman in black and the boy in black hair. He did not approve of them. He liked the gray man, who had expressed a wish to be called "Uncleharri." They nodded at each other when they met, and the gray man showed him a little ship with rigging that took up and down.

"She is a model of the *Brisk* — the little *Brisk* that was sore exposed that day at Navarino." The gray man hummed the last words and fell into a reverie. "I'll tell you about Navarino, Punch, when we go for walks together; and

you mustn't touch the ship, because she's th *Brisk.*"

Long before that walk, the first of many, wa taken, they roused Punch and Judy in the chil dawn of a February morning to say Good-bye and, of all people in the wide earth, to Papa an Mamma — both crying this time. Punch wa very sleepy and Judy was cross.

"Don't forget us," pleaded Mamma. "Oh my little son, don't forget us, and see that Judy remembers too."

"I've told Judy to bemember," said Punch wriggling, for his father's beard tickled his neck "I've told Judy — ten — forty — 'leven thousan times. But Ju's so young — quite a baby — isn' she?"

"Yes," said Papa, "quite a baby, and yo must be good to Judy, and make haste to lear to write and — and — and ——"

Punch was back in his bed again. Judy wa fast asleep, and there was the rattle of a cab below Papa and Mamma had gone away. Not to Nas sick; that was across the sea. To some plac much nearer, of course, and equally of course the would return. They came back after dinner parties, and Papa had come back after he ha been to a place called "The Snows," and Mamm with him, to Punch and Judy at Mrs. Inverarity' house in Marine Lines. Assuredly they woul

come back again. So Punch fell asleep till the true morning, when the black-haired boy met him with the information that Papa and Mamma had gone to Bombay, and that he and Judy were to stay at Downe Lodge "for ever." Antirosa, tearfully appealed to for a contradiction, said that Harry had spoken the truth, and that it behooved Punch to fold up his clothes neatly on going to bed. Punch went out and wept bitterly with Judy, into whose fair head he had driven some ideas of the meaning of separation.

When a matured man discovers that he has been deserted by Providence, deprived of his God, and cast, without help, comfort, or sympathy, upon a world which is new and strange to him, his despair, which may find expression in evil-living, the writing of his experiences, or the more satisfactory diversion of suicide, is generally supposed to be impressive. A child, under exactly similar circumstances as far as its knowledge goes, cannot very well curse God and die. It howls till its nose is red, its eyes are sore, and its head aches. Punch and Judy, through no fault of their own, had lost all their world. They sat in the hall and cried; the black-haired boy looking on from afar.

The model of the ship availed nothing, though the gray man assured Punch that he might pull the rigging up and down as much as he pleased;

and Judy was promised free entry into the kitchen. They wanted Papa and Mamma gone to Bombay beyond the seas, and their grief while it lasted was without remedy.

When the tears ceased the house was very still. Antirosa had decided that it was better to let the children "have their cry out," and the boy had gone to school. Punch raised his head from the floor and sniffed mournfully. Judy was nearly asleep. Three short years had not taught her how to bear sorrow with full knowledge. There was a distant, dull boom in the air — a repeated heavy thud. Punch knew that sound in Bombay in the Monsoon. It was the sea — the sea that must be traversed before any one could get to Bombay.

"Quick, Ju!" he cried, "we're close to the sea. I can hear it! Listen! That's where they've went. P'raps we can catch them if we was in time. They didn't mean to go without us. They've only forgot."

"Iss," said Judy. "They've only forgotted. Less go to the sea."

The hall-door was open, and so was the garden-gate.

"It's very, very big, this place," he said, looking cautiously down the road, "and we will get lost; but *I* will find a man and order him to take me back to my house — like I did in Bombay."

He took Judy by the hand, and the two ran

hatless in the direction of the sound of the sea. Downe Villa was almost the last of a range of newly-built houses running out, through a field of brick-mounds, to a heath where gypsies occasionally camped and where the Garrison Artillery of Rocklington practised. There were few people to be seen, and the children might have been taken for those of the soldiery who ranged far. Half an hour the wearied little legs tramped across heath, potato-patch, and sand-dune.

"I'se so tired," said Judy, "and Mamma will be angry."

"Mamma's *never* angry. I suppose she is waiting at the sea now while Papa gets tickets. We'll find them and go along with. Ju, you mustn't sit down. Only a little more and we'll come to the sea. Ju, if you sit down I'll *thmack* you!" said Punch.

They climbed another dune, and came upon the great gray sea at low tide. Hundreds of crabs were scuttling about the beach, but there was no trace of Papa and Mamma, not even of a ship upon the waters — nothing but sand and mud for miles and miles.

And "Uncleharri" found them by chance — very muddy and very forlorn — Punch dissolved in tears, but trying to divert Judy with an "ickle trab," and Judy wailing to the pitiless horizon for "Mamma, Mamma!" — and again "Mamma!"

The Second Bag

Ah, well-a-day, for we are souls bereaved!
Of all the creatures under Heaven's wide scope
We are most hopeless, who had once most hope,
And most beliefless, who had most believed.

The City of Dreadful Night.

this time not a word about Black Sheep. He
: later, and Harry the black-haired boy was
ıly responsible for his coming.
ıdy — who could help loving little Judy? —
:d, by special permit, into the kitchen, and
ːe straight to Aunty Rosa's heart. Harry was
ty Rosa's one child, and Punch was the extra
about the house. There was no special place
im or his little affairs, and he was forbidden
ırawl on sofas and explain his ideas about the
ufacture of this world and his hopes for his
:e. Sprawling was lazy and wore out sofas,
little boys were not expected to talk. They
talked to, and the talking to was intended
he benefit of their morals. As the unques-
:d despot of the house at Bombay, Punch
d not quite understand how he came to be of
ccount in this his new life.
arry might reach across the table and take
: he wanted; Judy might point and get what
wanted. Punch was forbidden to do either.

The gray man was his great hope and stand-by for many months after Mamma and Papa left, and he had forgotten to tell Judy to "bemember Mamma."

This lapse was excusable, because in the interval he had been introduced by Aunty Rosa to two very impressive things — an abstraction called God, the intimate friend and ally of Aunty Rosa, generally believed to live behind the kitchen range because it was hot there — and a dirty brown book filled with unintelligible dots and marks. Punch was always anxious to oblige everybody. He therefore welded the story of the Creation on to what he could recollect of his Indian fairy tales, and scandalised Aunty Rosa by repeating the result to Judy. It was a sin, a grievous sin, and Punch was talked to for a quarter of an hour. He could not understand where the iniquity came in, but was careful not to repeat the offence, because Aunty Rosa told him that God had heard every word he had said and was very angry. If this were true, why didn't God come and say so, thought Punch, and dismissed the matter from his mind. Afterwards he learned to know the Lord as the only thing in the world more awful than Aunty Rosa — as a Creature that stood in the background and counted the strokes of the cane.

But the reading was, just then, a much more

serious matter than any creed. Aunty Rosa s
him upon a table and told him that A B meant a

"Why?" said Punch. "A is a and B is be
Why does A B mean ab?"

"Because I tell you it does," said Aunty Ros
"and you've got to say it."

Punch said it accordingly, and for a mont
hugely against his will, stumbled through the brow
book, not in the least comprehending what it mean
But Uncle Harry, who walked much and gene
ally alone, was wont to come into the nursery an
suggest to Aunty Rosa that Punch should wal
with him. He seldom spoke, but he showed Punc
all Rocklington, from the mud-banks and the san
of the back-bay to the great harbours where shi
lay at anchor, and the dockyards where the ham
mers were never still, and the marine-store shop
and the shiny brass counters in the Offices whe
Uncle Harry went once every three months with
slip of blue paper and received sovereigns in e
change; for he held a wound-pension. Punc
heard, too, from his lips the story of the battle of N
varino, where the sailors of the Fleet, for three da
afterwards, were deaf as posts and could only sig
to each other. "That was because of the noise
the guns," said Uncle Harry, "and I have got th
wadding of a bullet somewhere inside me now

Punch regarded him with curiosity. He ha
not the least idea what wadding was, and his n

[illegible] of a bullet was a [illegible] cannon-ball [illegible] than his own head. How could Uncle Harry [illegible] a cannon-ball inside him? He was [illegible] to ask, for fear Uncle Harry might be angry.

Punch had never known what anger [illegible] anger—meant until one terrible day when Harry had taken his paint-box to paint a boat with, and Punch had protested. Then Uncle Harry had appeared on the scene and, muttering something about "strangers' children," had with a [illegible] ten the black-haired boy across the [illegible] he wept and yelled, and Aunty Rosa came in and abused Uncle Harry for cruelty to his own flesh and blood, and Punch shuddered to the [illegible] of his shoes. "It wasn't my fault," he explained to the boy, but both Harry and Aunty Rosa said that it was, and that Punch had told tales, and for a week there were no more walks with Uncle Harry.

But that week brought a great joy to Punch.

He had repeated till he was thrice weary the statement that "the Cat lay on the Mat and the Rat came in."

"Now I can truly read," said Punch, "and now I will never read anything in the world."

He put the brown book in the cupboard where his school-books lived, and accidentally tumbled out a venerable volume, without covers, labelled "Sharpe's Magazine." There was the most pos-

tentous picture of a griffin on the first page, wi
verses below. The griffin carried off one sheep
day from a German village, till a man came wi
a "falchion" and split the griffin open. Goodne
only knew what a falchion was, but there was t
Griffin, and his history was an improvement up
the eternal Cat.

"This," said Punch, "means things, and now
will know all about everything in all the worl
He read till the light failed, not understanding
tithe of the meaning, but tantalised by glimps
of new worlds hereafter to be revealed.

"What is a 'falchion'? What is a 'e-w
lamb'? What is a 'base *uss*urper'? What
a 'verdant me-ad'?" he demanded with flush
cheeks, at bedtime, of the astonished Aun
Rosa.

"Say your prayers and go to sleep," she replie
and that was all the help Punch then or afterwar
found at her hands in the new and delightful e
ercise of reading.

"Aunty Rosa only knows about God a
things like that," argued Punch. "Uncle Har
will tell me."

The next walk proved that Uncle Harry cou
not help either: but he allowed Punch to tal
and even sat down on a bench to hear about t
Griffin. Other walks brought other stories
Punch ranged further afield, for the house he

large store of old books that no one ever opened — from "Frank Fairlegh" in serial numbers, and the earlier poems of Tennyson, contributed anonymously to "Sharpe's Magazine," to '62 Exhibition Catalogues, gay with colours and delightfully incomprehensible, and odd leaves of "Gulliver's Travels."

As soon as Punch could string a few pot-hooks together, he wrote to Bombay, demanding by return of post "all the books in all the world." Papa could not comply with this modest indent, but sent "Grimm's Fairy Tales" and a Hans Andersen. That was enough. If he were only left alone, Punch could pass, at any hour he chose, into a land of his own, beyond reach of Aunty Rosa and her God, Harry and his teasements, and Judy's claims to be played with.

"Don't disturve me, I'm reading. Go and play in the kitchen," grunted Punch. "Aunty Rosa lets *you* go there." Judy was cutting her second teeth and was fretful. She appealed to Aunty Rosa, who descended on Punch.

"I was reading," he explained, "reading a book. I *want* to read."

"You're only doing that to show off," said Aunty Rosa. "But we'll see. Play with Judy now, and don't open a book for a week."

Judy did not pass a very enjoyable playtime with Punch, who was consumed with indignation.

e was a pettiness at the bottom of the prohi-
n which puzzled him.

It's what I like to do," he said, "and she's
id out that and stopped me. Don't cry, Ju—
asn't your fault — *please* don't cry, or she'll
I made you."

u loyally mopped up her tears, and the two
yed in their nursery, a room in the basement
l half underground, to which they were regu-
ly sent after the midday dinner while Aunty
sa slept. She drank wine — that is to say,
nething from a bottle in the cellaret — for her
omach's sake, but if she did not fall asleep she
ould sometimes come into the nursery to see
at the children were really playing. Now
ricks, wooden hoops, ninepins, and chinaware
annot amuse for ever, especially when all Fairy-
nd is to be won by the mere opening of a book,
nd, as often as not, Punch would be discovered
eading to Judy or telling her interminable tales.
That was an offence in the eyes of the law, and
Judy would be whisked off by Aunty Rosa, while
Punch was left to play alone, "and be sure that I
hear you doing it."

It was not a cheering employ, for he had to
make a playful noise. At last, with infinite craft,
he devised an arrangement whereby the table
could be supported as to three legs on toy bricks,
leaving the fourth clear to bring down on the

floor. He could work the table with one hand and hold a book with the other. This he did till an evil day when Aunty Rosa pounced upon him unawares and told him that he was "acting a lie."

"If you're old enough to do that," she said —her temper was always worst after dinner— "you're old enough to be beaten."

"But — I'm — I'm not a animal!" said Punch, aghast. He remembered Uncle Harry and the stick, and turned white. Aunty Rosa had hidden a light cane behind her, and Punch was beaten then and there over the shoulders. It was a revelation to him. The room-door was shut, and he was left to weep himself into repentance and work out his own gospel of life.

Aunty Rosa, he argued, had the power to beat him with many stripes. It was unjust and cruel, and Mamma and Papa would never have allowed it. Unless perhaps, as Aunty Rosa seemed to imply, they had sent secret orders. In which case he was abandoned indeed. It would be discreet in the future to propitiate Aunty Rosa, but then, again, even in matters in which he was innocent, he had been accused of wishing to "show off." He had "shown off" before visitors when he had attacked a strange gentleman — Harry's uncle, not his own — with requests for information about the Griffin and the falchion, and the precise nature of the Tilbury in which Frank Fairlegh rode —

all points of paramount interest which he was bursting to understand. Clearly it would not do to pretend to care for Aunty Rosa.

At this point Harry entered and stood afar off, eying Punch, a dishevelled heap in the corner of the room, with disgust.

"You're a liar — a young liar," said Harry, with great unction, "and you're to have tea down here because you're not fit to speak to us. And you're not to speak to Judy again till Mother gives you leave. You'll corrupt her. You're only fit to associate with the servant. Mother says so."

Having reduced Punch to a second agony of tears, Harry departed upstairs with the news that Punch was still rebellious.

Uncle Harry sat uneasily in the dining-room. "Damn it all, Rosa," said he at last, "can't you leave the child alone? He's a good enough little chap when I meet him."

"He puts on his best manners with you, Henry," said Aunty Rosa, "but I'm afraid, I'm very much afraid, that he is the Black Sheep of the family."

Harry heard and stored up the name for future use. Judy cried till she was bidden to stop, her brother not being worth tears; and the evening concluded with the return of Punch to the upper regions and a private sitting at which all the blind-

ing horrors of Hell were revealed to Punch with such store of imagery as Aunty Rosa's narrow mind possessed.

Most grievous of all was Judy's round-eyed reproach, and Punch went to bed in the depths of the Valley of Humiliation. He shared his room with Harry, and knew the torture in store. For an hour and a half he had to answer that young gentleman's questions as to his motives for telling a lie, and a grievous lie, the precise quantity of punishment inflicted by Aunty Rosa, and had also to profess his deep gratitude for such religious instruction as Harry thought fit to impart.

From that day began the downfall of Punch, now Black Sheep.

"Untrustworthy in one thing, untrustworthy in all," said Aunty Rosa, and Harry felt that Black Sheep was delivered into his hands. He would wake him up in the night to ask him why he was such a liar.

"I don't know," Punch would reply.

"Then don't you think you ought to get up and pray to God for a new heart?"

"Y-yess."

"Get out and pray, then!" And Punch would get out of bed with raging hate in his heart against all the world, seen and unseen. He was always tumbling into trouble. Harry had a knack of cross-examining him as to his day's doings, which

seldom failed to lead him, sleepy and savage, into half a dozen contradictions — all duly reported to Aunty Rosa next morning.

"But it *wasn't* a lie," Punch would begin, charging into a laboured explanation that landed him more hopelessly in the mire. "I said that I didn't say my prayers *twice* over in the day, and *that* was on Tuesday. *Once* I did. I *know* I did, but Harry said I didn't," and so forth, till the tension brought tears, and he was dismissed from the table in disgrace.

"You usen't to be as bad as this," said Judy, awe-stricken at the catalogue of Black Sheep's crimes. "Why are you so bad now?"

"I don't know," Black Sheep would reply. "I'm not, if I only wasn't bothered upside down. I knew what I *did*, and I want to say so; but Harry always makes it out different somehow, and Aunty Rosa doesn't believe a word I say. Oh, Ju! don't *you* say I'm bad too."

"Aunty Rosa says you are," said Judy. "She told the Vicar so when he came yesterday."

"Why does she tell all the people outside the house about me? It isn't fair," said Black Sheep. "When I was in Bombay, and was bad — *doing* bad, not made-up bad like this — Mamma told Papa, and Papa told me he knew, and that was all. *Outside* people didn't know too — even Meeta didn't know."

"I don't remember," said Judy wistfully. "I was all little then. Mamma was just as fond of you as she was of me, wasn't she?"

"'Course she was. So was Papa. So was everybody."

"Aunty Rosa likes me more than she does you. She says that you are a Trial and a Black Sheep, and I'm not to speak to you more than I can help."

"Always? Not outside of the times when you mustn't speak to me at all?"

Judy nodded her head mournfully. Black Sheep turned away in despair, but Judy's arms were round his neck.

"Never mind, Punch," she whispered. "I *will* speak to you just the same as ever and ever. You're my own own brother, though you are — though Aunty Rosa says you're Bad, and Harry says you're a little coward. He says that if I pulled your hair hard, you'd cry."

"Pull, then," said Punch.

Judy pulled gingerly.

"Pull harder — as hard as you can! There! I don't mind how much you pull it *now*. If you'll speak to me same as ever I'll let you pull it as much as you like — pull it out if you like. But I know if Harry came and stood by and made you do it, I'd cry."

So the two children sealed the compact with a

kiss, and Black Sheep's heart was cheered within him, and by extreme caution and careful avoidance of Harry he acquired virtue, and was allowed to read undisturbed for a week. Uncle Harry took him for walks, and consoled him with rough tenderness, never calling him Black Sheep. "It's good for you, I suppose, Punch," he used to say. "Let us sit down. I'm getting tired." His steps led him now not to the beach, but to the Cemetery of Rocklington, amid the potato-fields. For hours the gray man would sit on a tombstone, while Black Sheep read epitaphs, and then with a sigh would stump home again.

"I shall lie there soon," said he to Black Sheep, one winter evening, when his face showed white as a worn silver coin under the light of the lych-gate. "You needn't tell Aunty Rosa."

A month later, he turned sharp round, ere half a morning walk was completed, and stumped back to the house. "Put me to bed, Rosa," he muttered. "I've walked my last. The wadding has found me out."

They put him to bed, and for a fortnight the shadow of his sickness lay upon the house, and Black Sheep went to and fro unobserved. Papa had sent him some new books, and he was told to keep quiet. He retired into his own world, and was perfectly happy. Even at night his felicity was unbroken. He could lie in bed and string him-

self tales of travel and adventure while Harry was downstairs.

"Uncle Harry's going to die," said Judy, who now lived almost entirely with Aunty Rosa.

"I'm very sorry," said Black Sheep soberly. "He told me that a long time ago."

Aunty Rosa heard the conversation. "Will nothing check your wicked tongue?" she said angrily. There were blue circles round her eyes.

Black Sheep retreated to the nursery and read "Cometh up as a Flower" with deep and uncomprehending interest. He had been forbidden to open it on account of its "sinfulness," but the bonds of the Universe were crumbling, and Aunty Rosa was in great grief.

"I'm glad," said Black Sheep. "She's unhappy now. It wasn't a lie, though. *I* knew. He told me not to tell."

That night Black Sheep woke with a start. Harry was not in the room, and there was a sound of sobbing on the next floor. Then the voice of Uncle Harry, singing the song of the Battle of Navarino, came through the darkness:—

"Our vanship was the Asia—
The Albion and Genoa!"

"He's getting well," thought Black Sheep, who knew the song through all its seventeen verses.

But the blood froze at his little heart as he thoug
The voice leapt an octave, and rang shrill as
boatswain's pipe : —

"And next came on the lovely Rose,
The Philomel, her fire-ship, closed,
And the little Brisk was sore exposed
That day at Navarino."

" That day at Navarino, Uncle Harry ! " shout
Black Sheep, half wild with excitement and fe
of he knew not what.

A door opened, and Aunty Rosa screamed
the staircase : " Hush ! For God's sake hush, y
little devil. Uncle Harry is *dead !* "

The Third Bag

Journeys end in lovers' meeting,
Every wise man's son doth know.

" I wonder what will happen to me now," thoug
Black Sheep, when semi-pagan rites peculiar
the burial of the Dead in middle-class houses h
been accomplished, and Aunty Rosa, awful
black crape, had returned to this life. " I do
think I've done anything bad that she knows
I suppose I will soon. She will be very cro
after Uncle Harry's dying, and Harry will
cross too. I'll keep in the nursery."

Unfortunately for Punch's plans, it was decided that he should be sent to a day-school which Harry attended. This meant a morning walk with Harry, and perhaps an evening one; but the prospect of freedom in the interval was refreshing. "Harry'll tell everything I do, but I won't do anything," said Black Sheep. Fortified with this virtuous resolution, he went to school only to find that Harry's version of his character had preceded him, and that life was a burden in consequence. He took stock of his associates. Some of them were unclean, some of them talked in dialect, many dropped their h's, and there were two Jews and a negro, or some one quite as dark, in the assembly. "That's a *bubsbi*," said Black Sheep to himself. "Even Meeta used to laugh at a *bubsbi*. I don't think this is a proper place." He was indignant for at least an hour, till he reflected that any expostulation on his part would be by Aunty Rosa construed into "showing off," and that Harry would tell the boys.

"How do you like school?" said Aunty Rosa at the end of the day.

"I think it is a very nice place," said Punch quietly.

"I suppose you warned the boys of Black Sheep's character?" said Aunty Rosa to Harry.

"Oh, yes," said the censor of Black Sheep's morals. "They know all about him."

"If I was with my father," said Black She stung to the quick, "I shouldn't *speak* to th boys. He wouldn't let me. They live in sho I saw them go into shops — where their fath live and sell things."

"You're too good for that school, are you?" s Aunty Rosa, with a bitter smile. "You ought to grateful, Black Sheep, that those boys speak to y at all. It isn't every school that takes little liar

Harry did not fail to make much capital out Black Sheep's ill-considered remark; with the sult that several boys, including the *bubshi*, de onstrated to Black Sheep the eternal equality the human race by smacking his head, and consolation from Aunty Rosa was that it "serv him right for being vain." He learned, howev to keep his opinions to himself, and by propiti ing Harry in carrying books and the like to g a little peace. His existence was not too joyf From nine till twelve he was at school, and fro two to four, except on Saturdays. In the eve ings he was sent down into the nursery to prepa his lessons for the next day, and every night car the dreaded cross-questionings at Harry's har Of Judy he saw but little. She was deeply re gious — at six years of age Religion is easy come by — and sorely divided between her nat ral love for Black Sheep and her love for Aun Rosa, who could do no wrong.

The lean woman returned that love with interest, and Judy, when she dared, took advantage of this for the remission of Black Sheep's penalties. Failures in lessons at school were punished at home by a week without reading other than school-books, and Harry brought the news of such a failure with glee. Further, Black Sheep was then bound to repeat his lessons at bedtime to Harry, who generally succeeded in making him break down, and consoled him by gloomiest forebodings for the morrow. Harry was at once spy, practical joker, inquisitor, and Aunty Rosa's deputy executioner. He filled his many posts to admiration. From his actions, now that Uncle Harry was dead, there was no appeal. Black Sheep had not been permitted to keep any self-respect at school: at home he was of course utterly discredited, and grateful for any pity that the servant-girls — they changed frequently at Downe Lodge because they, too, were liars — might show. "You're just fit to row in the same boat with Black Sheep," was a sentiment that each new Jane or Eliza might expect to hear, before a month was over, from Aunty Rosa's lips; and Black Sheep was used to ask new girls whether they had yet been compared to him. Harry was "Master Harry" in their mouths; Judy was officially "Miss Judy"; but Black Sheep was never anything more than Black Sheep *tout court.*

As time went on and the memory of Papa an Mamma became wholly overlaid by the unplea ant task of writing them letters, under Aunt Rosa's eye, each Sunday, Black Sheep forg what manner of life he had led in the beginnin of things. Even Judy's appeals to "try and r member about Bombay" failed to quicken him.

"I can't remember," he said. "I know I use to give orders and Mamma kissed me."

"Aunty Rosa will kiss you if you are good pleaded Judy.

"Ugh! I don't want to be kissed by Aunt Rosa. She'd say I was doing it to get somethin more to eat."

The weeks lengthened into months, and th holidays came; but just before the holidays Blac Sheep fell into deadly sin.

Among the many boys whom Harry had i cited to "punch Black Sheep's head because h daren't hit back" was one, more aggravating tha the rest, who, in an unlucky moment, fell upo Black Sheep when Harry was not near. Th blows stung, and Black Sheep struck back random with all the power at his command. Th boy dropped and whimpered. Black Sheep wa astounded at his own act, but, feeling the unr sisting body under him, shook it with both h hands in blind fury and then began to throttle h enemy, meaning honestly to slay him. The

was a scuffle, and Black Sheep was torn off the body by Harry and some colleagues, and cuffed home tingling but exultant. Aunty Rosa was out: pending her arrival, Harry set himself to lecture Black Sheep on the sin of murder—which he described as the offence of Cain.

"Why didn't you fight him fair? What did you hit him when he was down for, you little cur?"

Black Sheep looked up at Harry's throat and then at a knife on the dinner-table.

"I don't understand," he said wearily. "You always set him on me and told me I was a coward when I blubbed. Will you leave me alone until Aunty Rosa comes in? She'll beat me if you tell her I ought to be beaten; so it's all right."

"It's all wrong," said Harry magisterially. "You nearly killed him, and I shouldn't wonder if he dies."

"Will he die?" said Black Sheep.

"I dare say," said Harry, "and then you'll be hanged, and go to Hell."

"All right," said Black Sheep, picking up the table-knife. "Then I'll kill *you* now. You say things and do things, and—and *I* don't know how things happen, and you never leave me alone—and I don't care *what* happens!"

He ran at the boy with the knife, and Harry fled upstairs to his room, promising Black Sheep

the finest thrashing in the world when Aunty Rosa returned. Black Sheep sat at the bottom of the stairs, the table-knife in his hand, and wept for that he had not killed Harry. The servant-girl came up from the kitchen, took the knife away, and consoled him. But Black Sheep was beyond consolation. He would be badly beaten by Aunty Rosa; then there would be another beating at Harry's hands; then Judy would not be allowed to speak to him; then the tale would be told at school, and then——

There was no one to help and no one to care, and the best way out of the business was by death. A knife would hurt, but Aunty Rosa had told him, a year ago, that if he sucked paint he would die. He went into the nursery, unearthed the now disused Noah's Ark, and sucked the paint off as many animals as remained. It tasted abominable, but he had licked Noah's Dove clean by the time Aunty Rosa and Judy returned. He went upstairs and greeted them with: "Please, Aunty Rosa, I believe I've nearly killed a boy at school, and I've tried to kill Harry, and when you've done all about God and Hell, will you beat me and get it over?"

The tale of the assault as told by Harry could only be explained on the ground of possession by the Devil. Wherefore Black Sheep was not only most excellently beaten, once by Aunty Rosa and

once, when thoroughly cowed down, by Harry, but he was further prayed for at family prayers, together with Jane, who had stolen a cold rissole from the pantry and snuffled audibly as her sin was brought before the Throne of Grace. Black Sheep was sore and stiff, but triumphant. He would die that very night and be rid of them all. No, he would ask for no forgiveness from Harry, and at bedtime would stand no questioning at Harry's hands, even though addressed as "Young Cain."

"I've been beaten," said he, "and I've done other things. I don't care what I do. If you speak to me to-night, Harry, I'll get out and try to kill you. Now you can kill me if you like."

Harry took his bed into the spare room, and Black Sheep lay down to die.

It may be that the makers of Noah's Arks know that their animals are likely to find their way into young mouths, and paint them accordingly. Certain it is that the common, weary next morning broke through the windows and found Black Sheep quite well and a good deal ashamed of himself, but richer by the knowledge that he could, in extremity, secure himself against Harry for the future.

When he descended to breakfast on the first day of the holidays, he was greeted with the news that Harry, Aunty Rosa, and Judy were going

away to Brighton, while Black Sheep was to sta
in the house with the servant. His latest ou
break suited Aunty Rosa's plans admirably.
gave her good excuse for leaving the extra bo
behind. Papa in Bombay, who really seemed
know a young sinner's wants to the hour, sen
that week, a package of new books. And wi
these, and the society of Jane on board-wage
Black Sheep was left alone for a month.

The books lasted for ten days. They we
eaten too quickly in long gulps of twelve hou
at a time. Then came days of doing absolute
nothing, of dreaming dreams and marching im
ginary armies up and down stairs, of counting th
number of banisters, and of measuring the leng
and breadth of every room in handspans — fif
down the side, thirty across, and fifty back agai
Jane made many friends, and, after receivin
Black Sheep's assurance that he would not tell
her absences, went out daily for long hours. Blac
Sheep would follow the rays of the sinking su
from the kitchen to the dining-room and thenc
upward to his own bedroom until all was gra
dark, and he ran down to the kitchen fire and rea
by its light. He was happy in that he was le
alone and could read as much as he pleased. Bu
later, he grew afraid of the shadows of windo
curtains and the flapping of doors and the creak
ing of shutters. He went out into the garde

and the rustling of the laurel-bushes frightened him.

He was glad when they all returned — Aunty Rosa, Harry, and Judy — full of news, and Judy laden with gifts. Who could help loving loyal little Judy? In return for all her merry babblement, Black Sheep confided to her that the distance from the hall-door to the top of the first landing was exactly one hundred and eighty-four handspans. He had found it out himself.

Then the old life recommenced; but with a difference, and a new sin. To his other iniquities Black Sheep had now added a phenomenal clumsiness — was as unfit to trust in action as he was in word. He himself could not account for spilling everything he touched, upsetting glasses as he put his hand out, and bumping his head against doors that were manifestly shut. There was a gray haze upon all his world, and it narrowed month by month, until at last it left Black Sheep almost alone with the flapping curtains that were so like ghosts, and the nameless terrors of broad daylight that were only coats on pegs after all.

Holidays came and holidays went, and Black Sheep was taken to see many people whose faces were all exactly alike; was beaten when occasion demanded, and tortured by Harry on all possible occasions; but defended by Judy through good

evil report, though she thereby drew upon her-
the wrath of Aunty Rosa.

The weeks were interminable, and Papa and
mma were clean forgotten. Harry had left
ool and was a clerk in a Banking-Office.
ed from his presence, Black Sheep resolved
: he should no longer be deprived of his allow-
e of pleasure-reading. Consequently when he
ed at school he reported that all was well, and
ceived a large contempt for Aunty Rosa as he
how easy it was to deceive her. "She says
a little liar when I don't tell lies, and now
o, she doesn't know," thought Black Sheep.
nty Rosa had credited him in the past with
:y cunning and stratagem that had never en-
d into his head. By the light of the sordid
owledge that she had revealed to him he paid
back full tale. In a household where the
st innocent of his motives, his natural yearning
a little affection, had been interpreted into a de-
for more bread and jam or to ingratiate himself
h strangers and so put Harry into the back-
und, his work was easy. Aunty Rosa could
etrate certain kinds of hypocrisy, but not all.
set his child's wits against hers, and was no
re beaten. It grew monthly more and more
a trouble to read the school-books, and even
pages of the open-print story-books danced
were dim. So Black Sheep brooded in the

shadows that fell about him and cut him off from the world, inventing horrible punishments for "dear Harry," or plotting another line of the tangled web of deception that he wrapped round Aunty Rosa.

Then the crash came and the cobwebs were broken. It was impossible to foresee everything. Aunty Rosa made personal enquiries as to Black Sheep's progress, and received information that startled her. Step by step, with a delight as keen as when she convicted an underfed housemaid of the theft of cold meats, she followed the trail of Black Sheep's delinquencies. For weeks and weeks, in order to escape banishment from the book-shelves, he had made a fool of Aunty Rosa, of Harry, of God, of all the world! Horrible, most horrible, and evidence of an utterly depraved mind.

Black Sheep counted the cost. "It will only be one big beating, and then she'll put a card with 'Liar' on my back, same as she did before. Harry will whack me and pray for me, and she will pray for me at prayers and tell me I'm a Child of the Devil and give me hymns to learn. But I've done all my reading, and she never knew. She'll say she knew all along. She's an old liar too," said he.

For three days Black Sheep was shut in his own bedroom — to prepare his heart. "That means

› beatings. One at school and one here. *That* e will hurt most." And it fell even as he ought. He was thrashed at school before the ;ws and the *hubshi*, for the heinous crime of ringing home false reports of progress. He was hrashed at home by Aunty Rosa on the same :ount, and then the placard was produced. Aunty Rosa stitched it between his shoulders and bade him go for a walk with it upon him.

"If you make me do that," said Black Sheep very quietly, "I shall burn this house down, and perhaps I'll kill you. I don't know whether I *can* kill you—you're so bony—but I'll try."

No punishment followed this blasphemy, though Black Sheep held himself ready to work his way to Aunty Rosa's withered throat, and grip there till he was beaten off. Perhaps Aunty Rosa was afraid, for Black Sheep, having reached the Nadir of Sin, bore himself with a new recklessness.

In the midst of all the trouble there came a visitor from over the seas to Downe Lodge, who knew Papa and Mamma, and was commissioned to see Punch and Judy. Black Sheep was sent to the drawing-room and charged into a solid tea-table laden with china.

"Gently, gently, little man," said the visitor, turning Black Sheep's face to the light slowly, "What's that big bird on the palings?"

"What bird?" asked Black Sheep.

The visitor looked deep down into Black Sheep's eyes for half a minute, and then said suddenly: "Good God, the little chap's nearly blind!"

It was a most business-like visitor. He gave orders, on his own responsibility, that Black Sheep was not to go to school or open a book until Mamma came home. "She 'll be here in three weeks, as you know of course," said he, "and I'm Inverarity Sahib. I ushered you into this wicked world, young man, and a nice use you seem to have made of your time. You must do nothing whatever. Can you do that?"

"Yes," said Punch in a dazed way. He had known that Mamma was coming. There was a chance, then, of another beating. Thank Heaven, Papa wasn't coming too. Aunty Rosa had said of late that he ought to be beaten by a man.

For the next three weeks Black Sheep was strictly allowed to do nothing. He spent his time in the old nursery looking at the broken toys, for all of which account must be rendered to Mamma. Aunty Rosa hit him over the hands if even a wooden boat were broken. But that sin was of small importance compared to the other revelations, so darkly hinted at by Aunty Rosa.

"When your Mother comes, and hears what I have to tell her, she may appreciate you properly," she said grimly, and mounted guard over Judy

lest that small maiden should attempt to comfo
her brother, to the peril of her soul.

And Mamma came — in a four-wheeler — flu
tered with tender excitement. Such a Mamm
She was young, frivolously young, and beautifu
with delicately flushed cheeks, eyes that shor
like stars, and a voice that needed no appe
of outstretched arms to draw little ones to h
heart. Judy ran straight to her, but Black Shee
hesitated.

Could this wonder be "showing off"? Sh
would not put out her arms when she knew of h
crimes. Meantime was it possible that by fon
ling she wanted to get anything out of Blac
Sheep? Only all his love and all his confidenc
but that Black Sheep did not know. Aunty Ro
withdrew and left Mamma, kneeling between h
children, half laughing, half crying, in the ve
hall where Punch and Judy had wept five yea
before.

"Well, Chicks, do you remember me?"

"No," said Judy frankly, "but I said, 'God ble
Papa and Mamma,' ev'vy night."

"A little," said Black Sheep. "Remember
wrote to you every week, anyhow. That isn't
show off, but 'cause of what comes afterwards."

"What comes after? What should come a
ter, my darling boy?" And she drew him to h
again. He came awkwardly, with many angl

"Not used to petting," said the quick Mother-soul. "The girl is."

"She's too little to hurt any one," thought Black Sheep, "and if I said I'd kill her, she'd be afraid. I wonder what Aunty Rosa will tell."

There was a constrained late dinner, at the end of which Mamma picked up Judy and put her to bed with endearments manifold. Faithless little Judy had shown her defection from Aunty Rosa already. And that lady resented it bitterly. Black Sheep rose to leave the room.

"Come and say good-night," said Aunty Rosa, offering a withered cheek.

"Huh!" said Black Sheep. "I never kiss you, and I'm not going to show off. Tell that woman what I've done, and see what she says."

Black Sheep climbed into bed feeling that he had lost Heaven after a glimpse through the gates. In half an hour "that woman" was bending over him. Black Sheep flung up his right arm. It wasn't fair to come and hit him in the dark. Even Aunty Rosa never tried that. But no blow followed.

"Are you showing off? I won't tell you anything more than Aunty Rosa has, and *she* doesn't know everything," said Black Sheep as clearly as he could for the arms round his neck.

"Oh, my son — my little, little son! It was my fault — *my* fault, darling —— and yet how could

help it? Forgive me, Punch." The voice d out in a broken whisper, and two hot tears on Black Sheep's forehead.

"Has she been making you cry too!" he asked. You should see Jane cry. But you're nice, and ane is a Born Liar — Aunty Rosa says so."

"Hush, Punch, hush! My boy, don't talk like that. Try to love me a little bit — a little bit. You don't know how I want it. Punch-*baba*, come back to me! I am your Mother — your own Mother — and never mind the rest. I know — yes, I know, dear. It doesn't matter now. Punch, won't you care for me a little?"

It is astonishing how much petting a big boy of ten can endure when he is quite sure that there is no one to laugh at him. Black Sheep had never been made much of before, and here was this beautiful woman treating him — Black Sheep, the Child of the Devil and the inheritor of undying flame — as though he were a small God.

"I care for you a great deal, Mother dear," he whispered at last, "and I'm glad you've come back; but are you sure Aunty Rosa told you everything?"

"Everything. What *does* it matter? But" — the voice broke with a sob that was also laughter — "Punch, my poor, dear, half-blind darling, don't you think it was a little foolish of you?"

"*No.* It saved a lickin'."

Mamma shuddered and slipped away in the darkness to write a long letter to Papa. Here is an extract:—

. . . Judy is a dear, plump little prig who adores the woman, and wears with as much gravity as her religious opinions — only eight, Jack! — a venerable horse-hair atrocity which she calls her Bustle! I have just burnt it, and the child is asleep in my bed as I write. She will come to me at once. Punch I cannot quite understand. He is well nourished, but seems to have been worried into a system of small deceptions which the woman magnifies into deadly sins. Don't you recollect our own upbringing, dear, when the Fear of the Lord was so often the beginning of falsehood? I shall win Punch to me before long. I am taking the children away into the country to get them to know me, and, on the whole, I am content, or shall be when you come home, dear boy, and then, thank God, we shall be all under one roof again at last!

Three months later, Punch, no longer Black Sheep, has discovered that he is the veritable owner of a real, live, lovely Mamma, who is also a sister, comforter, and friend, and that he must protect her till the Father comes home. Deception does not suit the part of a protector, and, when one can do anything without question, where is the use of deception?

"Mother would be awfully cross if you walked through that ditch," says Judy, continuing a conversation.

"Mother's never angry," says Punch. "She'd

ay, 'You're a l
but I'll show."
nch walks throu
e knees. "M
as dirty as I can
Then change yo
ib-ly can!" M
the house. "A
There! 'Told y
rent now, and w
she had never
Not altogether. C
e drunk deep
picion, and De
l not wholly take
nay turn darker
l teach Faith wi